Why Were Women Enslaved?

E.V. Ramasamy

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Translated from the Tamil Original by
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THE PERIYAR SELF-RESPECT
PROPAGANDA INSTITUTION
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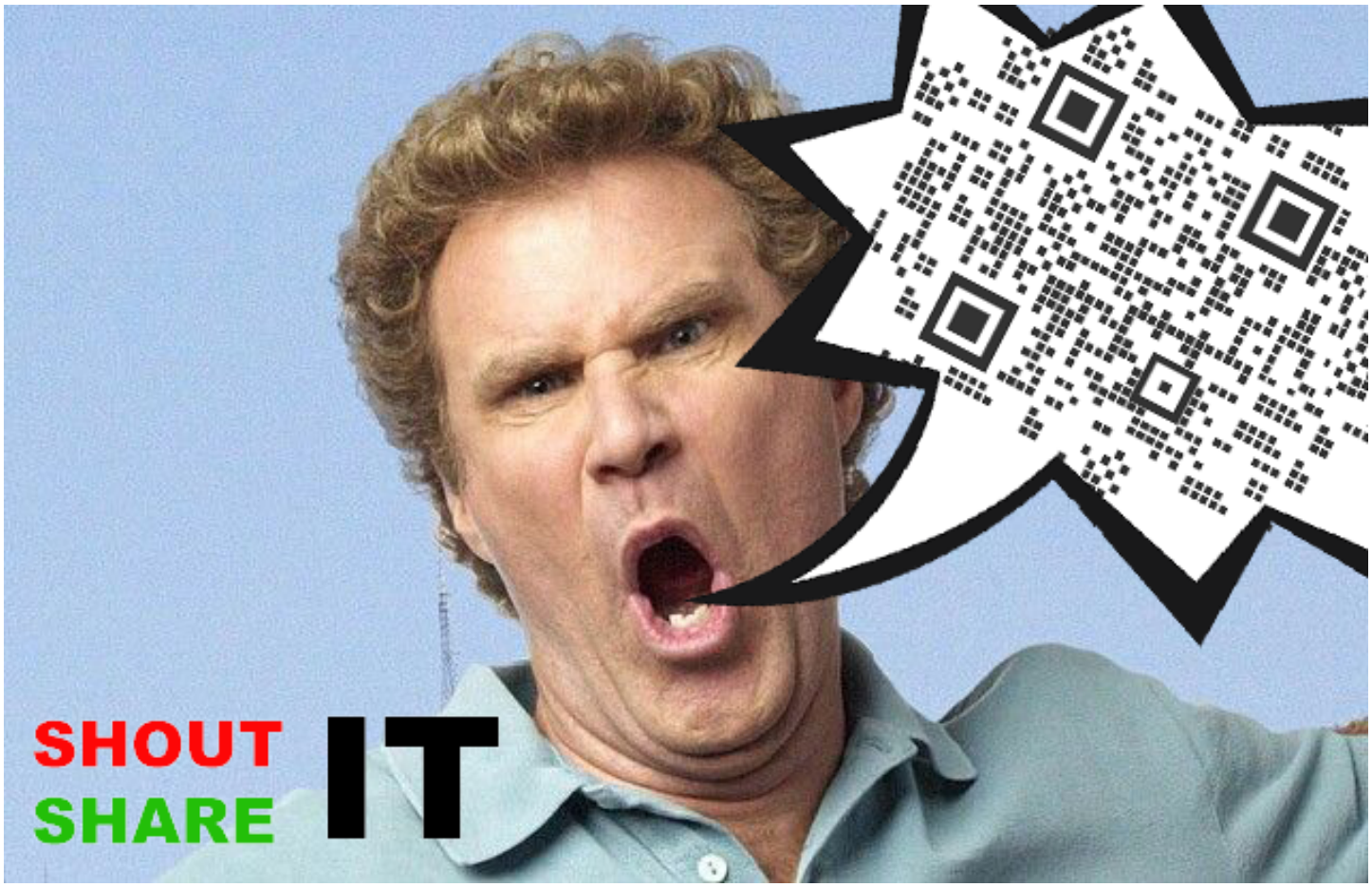
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WHY WERE WOMEN ENSLAVED?

E.V.RAMASAMY

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Preface

We consider it essential to write at least a few lines as preface about the issues discussed in this book *Penn Yaen Adimai Aanal* as desired by our publisher. The issues found here are greatly opposed to social restraint, morality, orthodox codes, religious doctrines, the code of laws given in the holy treatises, and the emotions and facts that have so far emerged from the people.

So, we cannot assume that an idea can be proved true and introduced among ordinary people on the strength of justice and rationalism because such people will feel that the opinions overturn conventional ideas and possess a revolutionary characteristic. Irrespective of an opinion's fairness, or its truthfulness that makes it amenable to rationalism and research, it is very easy to refute it in the name of traditions, holy treatises or religious doctrines without any sensible wisdom or impartial objective. Apart from creating such blame, they can easily ensure that the lay people accept such refutations and reproaches. Therefore, a fitting explanation has to be given in order to prove this. So, in the name of a preface, we are writing a few lines.

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The important opinions expressed in the first chapter 'Chastity' seek to emphasize that chastity is stressed only for women and such a stress alone is greatly responsible for enslaving women; if a situation has to emerge where men and women live equally with independence, the purpose and dogma forming the basis for chastity have to be changed and its justice should apply to both men and women equally.

The objective of the second chapter 'Valluvar and Chastity' is to point out that the so-called law-giving texts (regardless of the greatness of the person who wrote them), were written for their times keeping in mind the comforts of the target audience. Moreover, any law cannot be advantageous or common for all times, to all nations, or to all the sections of people. Therefore, the article is written to say that doctrines shouldn't be followed in an obstinate and blind manner, because one should take into consideration that no doctrine is timeless and universal.

The third chapter 'Love' has been written with the intention of exposing the false notions about conditional love: that it arises because of a divine power; that it is unchanging; and that if love happens once, it never changes for any reason whatsoever. The essay also seeks to show that love is a desire (which has the characteristic of appearing and disappearing) founded on nothing but the satisfaction, welfare, strength of those who desire.

The fourth chapter 'The Right to Divorce' is similar. It has been written to explain that marriage is merely an agreement-ritual between a man and woman for the sake of their living comforts—there is no justice in attributing divineness to it, and that such a marriage is fit to be annulled

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if it does not suit the comforts of men or women.

The fifth chapter 'Remarriage in not Wrong' has been written in adherence to the earlier chapter. It condemns the practice of denouncing a person's second marriage on the ground that a marriage takes place only for the comfort and happiness of both the man and the woman; it condemns the confusion, "we have married once, both of us are alive, how can anyone of us remarry?" and the habit of a person who wants to avoid causing discomfort to his/her partner because he/she is held back by consideration for the first wife/ husband's plight; it emphasizes that if both of them remarry there would be no problem for anybody. Moreover, the article has been written to remove the compulsions that govern the necessity for remarriage.

The sixth chapter 'Prostitution' highlights that the crime of prostitution is imposed only on women and that all over the world it bears no relevance to men. Because of this men indulge in it freely and as a result, women are made to face difficulties, loss, disease and the absence of happiness in life. The essay has been written, with truths gleaned from philosophy and experience, to emphasize that if prostitution is a crime under any meaning it should be equal for both men and women.

The seventh chapter titled 'State of Widows' has been written to illustrate the cruelties faced by women because of widowhood and to underscore the necessity for widow remarriage.

The seventh chapter titled 'The Plight of Widows' has been written to illustrate the cruelties faced by women because of widowhood and to underscore the necessity for widow remarriage.

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to avoid being considered as slaves of men, and to enjoy equal status in all arenas of life. The essay also underlines the necessity for women to get the rights to become inheritors of parental property.

The ninth and tenth chapters, entitled "Birth Control" and "Masculinity should be Destroyed for Women's Liberation" respectively, were written to bring out the facts that women face difficulties and become slaves because of pregnancy and child-bearing and that men and women face difficulties among themselves because of having too many children. Further, we also point out that women will never benefit because of men's efforts for women's welfare; therefore, women should completely abandon the idea that they were created by God in order to be the slaves of men, instead they should consider themselves equal to men (and not subordinate to men in any manner) and they should start waging their own struggle.

Therefore, these ten chapters have been written mainly to reveal the reasons why women were enslaved, why they became slaves, why they continue to be slaves, and how they (women) can break the shackles of their slavery to live as independent people. Moreover, its our opinion that in today's situation, the ideas in this book should be useful to people of any religion, any nationality and any community. Therefore, it is essential that not only women, but even all men with feelings of empathy and equality towards women, buy this book, read it and reform themselves.

Erode
01-01-1942

E. V. RAMASAMY

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Foreword

Periyar E.V. Ramasami, the doughty warrior of humanism, started the Self-Respect Movement in the year 1925 to fight against discrimination based on birth.

The discrimination between men and women on the basis of birth (caste—varna dharma) as well women enslavement are the twin evils of our society.

Periyar's humanism sprouted from his rationalism and stands for a new world of equality and liberty.

How did he become a valiant fighter against these twin evils? It is not by reading volumes or by attending research laboratories. Daily events in his family and prevailing circumstances made him think and propelled him to undertake this mighty mission as the liberator of the masses.

Throughout his life, Thanthai Periyar (Noble Father—as he was popularly adored, respected and called) remained a fearless, free thinker uninhibited by any attachments. His approach to each and every social problem is that of a social scientist. He never cared for name and fame. He always swam against the current as his stunning remedies were so unpopular and unsuited to the minds of the bigoted masses.

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He introduced himself not as a social reformer who rectifies some defects here and there in our society but as a revolutionary to demolish the old dingy, dilapidated society and build a new one in its place.

As a great revolutionary, he was the pioneer of family planning in India from the late 1920s and 1930s, and propagated it among the public amidst stout opposition. His public meetings were greeted not with bouquets, but with brickbats and chappals. He received them as real encomiums for his predominant ideas which he hoped would rule the new world in the future!

He openly preached why half of our population should remain as good-for-nothing slaves, ornamented dolls, child-producing machines, and workers confined to the kitchen and cooking ovens. Is it not a national crime to treat half of the population of our nation worse than dumb-driven cattle?

His revolutionary ideas touched the height of proclaiming when he declared that the institution of marriage should be declared as a criminal act!

The worst part of women enslavement is the loss of her identity!

She has no individual identity, being always merged with a male, either as a daughter, or a wife or a mother. This is how Manu Dharma ordained the position of Indian women.

The epics Ramayana, Mahabharat, Bhagavad Gita supported Manu's version.

Periyar's approach to end women enslavement is always a surgeon's cure, not a physician's cure!

Periyar asked women to organize themselves for their liberation. They should be liberated by their own efforts. Let

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them not depend on men who enjoy the fruits of their (women's) serfdom!

Women liberators are classified as belonging to different feminist schools of thought as

1. Liberal feminism
2. Radical feminism
3. Socialist feminism
4. Anarchist feminism
5. Cultural feminism
6. Domestic feminism
7. Black feminism
8. Eco-feminism and
9. Spritiual feminism etc.

When we analyze the thoughts of Periyar E. V. Ramasamy, his approach does not fit in wholly under any of the above schools of thought. Hence, it is inevitable to have a new classification as Periyar Feminism.

The old adage says 'charity begins at home' but Periyar's principle proclaims, 'equality should start from our home for womenfolk and that too not by their traditional male masters but by their own independent, revolutionary women groups who have nothing to lose but their chains.'

The original Tamil book—"*Penn Yaen Adimai Aanaal?*" was published some 75 years ago and considered to be a 'magna carta' for women's liberation. It is the guiding light towards the dawn of a new era.

The French translation of the book was released in Paris on 9th July 2005. This translation is done in an excellent way

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by the committed feminist, ardent Periyarist and ever-enthusiastic Meena Kandasamy. We congratulate her for her contribution to Periyar Feminism.

This may be a small step now, but will become a giant leap towards liberation of women! Let Periyar's ideas conquer the minds of the "slaves" so that the chains may be broken enabling them to move freely.

K. VEERAMANI

Chennai
01-07-2007

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Translator's Note

Translation is a process of re-visitation; therefore, a translator can never really control her desire to take you back to the past. So, allow me to indulge my pleasure. Before I begin to write of what Periyar thought about women, I should like to tell how women thought of him. He was a crusader for Self-Respect and social justice, and like all crusaders in their time, he was revered (by men who stood to gain) and reviled (by men who stood to lose). And, as always, the challenging task of recognition was taken up by women. In 1938, the Madras-based Progressive Women's Association applauded E. V. Ramasamy's activism and bestowed on him the honorific title of Periyar (The Great One). I have evoked this incident to show that while Periyar's writings left an indelible impression on women's rights in the Tamil culture; Tamil women too have irrevocably changed the manner of mentioning him, because within his lifetime, this title replaced his name in popular usage.

This collection of essays actually contains abridged versions of articles on gender issues that he wrote in the *Kudiarasu* from 1926 to 1930. As a translator, I have to confess

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that I could not acquire the first edition of the book that appeared in 1934 and was published by the Rationalist Publishers, Erode. The earliest edition that I could access is the 11th edition published in 1971. I have used the 20th edition, published in August 1997, for the current translation. As of 2004, 22 editions of the Tamil book have been published: this is enough testimony for its continued appeal across generations. In fact, issues that he raised seven decades ago continue to be centers of controversy today.

Periyar understood language as a site of subjugation and struggle; he coined the Tamil word *vibacharan* (male-prostitute) and lamented the fact that the word to imply a 'chaste-man' has been hidden from our languages.

He contested the words 'chastity' and 'prostitution' because they had a sex-selective application. Another word of contestation was 'love.' Periyar sought to destroy love's special effects and vehemently argued that it meant nothing more than desire, affection, friendship and passion. He tore its hype into shreds and robbed love of all its romantic charisma (perhaps, he wanted poets to abandon their profession).

He articulated love as a well-reasoned response, he rubbished third-party attempts to define 'love' and thereby interfere in other people's lives. He recognized marriages based on mutual consent, and attempted to remove the elements of 'divinity' attributed to marriages. His efforts to establish marriage as a social contract came as a shock to those who had considered it a sacred union.

He recast masculine and feminine subjectivities; he riled against the women icons of Hindu epics. He always believed

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that whatever applied for one sex should be applicable to the other sex also; whether it was the question of chastity, prostitution, remarriage or civil rights.

The earliest essay in this collection was written in 1926, a period of reform fever. In this essay on the plight of widows, Periyar slips into the mesmerizing snare of becoming a Hindu social reformer. He pleads the case for widow remarriage with a peculiar argument: the remarriage of young Hindu widows would signal the birth of more babies and thereby trigger a significant increase in the Hindu population!

But his success lay in the fact that he never remained stuck with a posture merely because he had articulated it. Barely two years later, he viewed the arrival of children with consternation and was vociferous in his campaign for birth control. In his inimitable style, he linked the enslavement of women to the burden of pregnancy. Paradoxically, in a society that frowned upon 'barren' women and stigmatized them as 'inauspicious', Periyar firmly believed that the only path to women's liberation was by having control over their bodies. Perhaps, in this project, Periyar's ideas foreshadowed The Pill.

His criticism of patriarchy was not restricted to caste-Hindu patriarchy alone. He vehemently criticized the purdah system followed by the Muslims. In his rhetorical style he said that those men who justified the burqa should live in it for a year at the least.

Nobody was spared from his criticism, not even himself. In his touching obituary to his first wife Nagammai (Kudiarasu, 14 May 1933) he candidly admitted that he hasn't followed with Nagammai, "even one-hundredth" of the ideas of women's liberation that he put forward.

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In the same period (in which the essays in this collection appeared in the Kudiarasu) he was also putting forth various ideas related to women: Equal education (1928), Self-Respect marriage (1928), Abolition of the devadasi system (1930), and Abolition of child marriage (1930). In a later phase of the Self Respect Movement he would also talk about the need for registration of marriages, self-defence for women, reservation for women in government jobs, equal rights to divorce and inheritance and so on.

Over the passage of years, his ideas have been merrily appropriated by the State: birth control became a national programme, widow remarriage was legitimized, Self-Respect marriage has recognized legally, and property rights were granted inch by cruel inch. Perhaps, his views were being translated into action long before they were translated into English.

In my quest for fidelity in translation, I have been as true to the Tamil original as possible. But, being a feminist who considers even textual fidelity as a patriarchal construct, I have taken liberties with the translation of this book's title. The original reads *Penn Yaen Adimai Aanal?*, which would literally mean: "Why Did Woman Become A Slave?" But since slavery is neither a process of becoming nor a question of choice, I felt that a literal translation of the title would invalidate the contents of the work. Hence, the different, and obvious, new title.

Finally, I feel that the public perception of Periyar's image has been crafted as Brahmin-basher and Idol-breaker, perhaps because such constructions serve requisite purposes in the political arena of Tamil Nadu. There is a certain politics that

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has prevented widespread popularity to Periyar's thoughts on the question of women's rights and liberation. The loss, indisputably, has been ours. Only a rigorous attack on patriarchy can help any struggle that seeks to usher in equality. The issue for gender equality is glossed over perhaps because it would have to include in its agenda, the annihilation of caste. The existence of male domination, like the existence of caste, serves the purpose for oppressive elements eager to perpetuate their supremacy.

Discussion of Periyar's thoughts on women's liberation (whether in internet forums, or little magazines) is often met with annoying criticism. Those who seek to scar and sully his feminist credentials almost always use the only 'weapon' at their disposal: his marriage at seventy years to Maniammai, who was younger to him by four decades. Personally, no act or speech or essay of Periyar has moved me as much as this marriage, which is in itself, a kind of testimony to his liberal thought.

It drove home the truth that despite all its social implications, marriage is only an agreement between two consenting individuals; and that the question of compatibility was a personal matter of mutual decision. The criticism from all quarters (liberal or conservative, male or female) was leveled against his choice of a young wife. Her choice of a much-older man was never discussed. The public hysteria against their marriage, and even a lot of intellectual 'positioning' against it, were merely indicative of a society that could only construe the man as an agent of action, the woman as an instrument at his hands, and marriage itself as a selfish act. A closer look at the cacophonous outpourings of those

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who walked away from the movement (following his marriage to Maniammai) will reveal that it actually emerged from their inability to digest Periyar's choice of a woman to succeed him in leading the Dravidar Kazhagam. Periyar never had any misgivings about a young woman's competence to take over the reins of a mass movement that he had painstakingly built and nurtured for nearly half a century: I cannot come up a greater example of his belief in feminism, in women power.

MEENA KANDASAMY

Chennai
27-06-2007

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Acknowledgments

I owe my first words of thanks to Dr. K. Veeramani, President, Dravidar Kazhagam for his sustained encouragement and words of appreciation that made this book possible.

His zeal to propagate the ideas of Periyar, particularly Periyar's thoughts on women rights, is simply unmatched: on our first meeting, when I told him that I was a translator, he spontaneously asked me to start translating Periyar's feminist writings.

He is very keen to bring out Periyar's writings in all major world languages. His sustained efforts have ensured that this book *Penn Yaen Adimai Aanaal?* has been translated into French already. He has been single-handedly responsible for taking Periyar to new heights and new audiences internationally. As Periyar's foremost follower, he has continued to keep Periyar's torch burning for several crucial decades.

I express my deep sense of gratitude to A. Arulmozhi, Propaganda Secretary, Dravidar Kazhagam who diligently went through the drafts of this translation and came up with vital suggestions.

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I thank my mother Dr. Vasantha Kandasamy and my father Dr. Kandasamy Vasantha for their continued interest and involvement. If there is one person who can take all the credit for my successfully completing the translation of this book, it is my younger sister Ilanthenral. Expressing any amount of thanks to her will not suffice.

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Chennai
27-06-2007

MEENA KANDASAMY

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1. Chastity

If we analyse the word *karpu* (chastity) in terms of its constituent elements, we understand that it has the word-root '*kal*' (to learn). If we look at it as it occurs in the maxim, "*Karpenappaduvadhu solthirambamai*" we understand that *karpu* means 'living up to ones words'; that is, it contains the concepts of integrity, truth and abiding by an agreement.

If we analyse the word *karpu* as an indivisible whole, it is employed to indicate *magalir nirai* (the virtues of women). We fail to understand how the term *nirai* (virtue) came to be used to specifically denote women. *Nirai* actually means indestructibility, firmness and chastity. Though one cannot find appropriate evidence that the word *karpu* (chastity) is relevant to women alone, we can only find the meanings: indestructible and firm.

If we look at the proper sense of the word 'indestructible', here it actually means pure, that is, unspoilt and unblemished.

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This word 'pure' occurs even in English in the sense of something that is not spoilt. That is, the English word 'chastity' means 'virginity'. If understood in this context, it has not been defined for either men or women, but it has been defined commonly for the human race to denote a 'state of absolute purity devoid of any sex.' So, chastity is not related to women alone; it can also be taken to mean that once a man/woman has had sex, he/she has lost chastity, irrespective of their subsequent purity.

In the Indo-Aryan language Sanskrit alone, chastity is defined as *pativrata* (loyal wifehood). I think that only here the concept of slavery was introduced into the word chastity. The term *pativrata* clearly denotes slavery not only because it has been given the meanings "she who considers her *pati* (husband) as god, she who considers it a *vrata* (vow) to be her husband's slave, she who doesn't take into account anyone other than her husband"; but also because the word *pati* means authority, master and leader.

Though the Tamil words '*thalaivi*' (leading lady), or '*nayaki*' (heroine) denote the wife, they are used only to refer to women in the state of love; for instance, the word *thalaivi* is not used in the real sense of the word, with reference to women who are submissive in life. Even the equivalent words '*nayakan*' (hero) and '*nayaki*' (heroine) are used only in stories and epics, especially where the stress is on the desire of men and women. The evenly matched words *nayakan-nayaki* and *thalaivan-thalaivi* are used to denote the phases of love and desire, whereas the state of chastity is linked only to women who are asked to consider their husband as lord and master.

In this regard, I am also a bit confused with the stand of

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our Thiruvalluvar. I feel that extreme slavishness and inferiority has been introduced in the context of women in the 6th chapter of the Thirukkural, *Vaazhkai Thunainalam* (Value of a Life-Partner), in the 91st chapter *Pennvazhi Cheral* (Being Led by Women) and in a few other individual couplets. It is said that it would rain instantly on the orders of a woman who worships her husband instead of God; a woman should take care of her husband, several such slavish concepts are found.

If people have a different opinion, I request them to read these two chapters (6 and 91), especially the 20 couplets in their original form and not heed the commentary. Regardless of whoever comes, or the extent of their argument that these two chapters are blameless, I would ask them to finally pay attention to the fact that if Thiruvalluvar had not been a man, but a woman who had written such couplets, would (s)he have portrayed such ideas? Likewise, if women themselves had written the books and *dharma-sastras* (law-giving religious treatises) about women, or if women had written the definition for the word chastity, would they have given the meaning of *pativrata* for chastity?

Since chastity has been defined as *pativrata* and because men have been made more powerful than women in wealth, income and physical strength, it has created a circumstance that favours women becoming slaves, and men becoming fools who think that chastity doesn't apply to them. Further, male domination is the only reason why the word to denote that men have chastity has been hidden from our languages.

It cannot be said that any country, religion, or society in the world has behaved with integrity in this matter with the

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exception of Russia (Soviet Land). For instance, although it appears as if European women have a lot of freedom, concepts of superiority and inferiority have been introduced into the words that were created to denote 'husband' and 'wife' and even the laws require obedience to the husband.

Further, the purdah system exists in some societies where women aren't allowed to step out of their quarters, they are supposed to cover their faces while going out; and where a man can marry several women whereas a woman can never have more than one husband. And in our country, we have several restrictions: once a woman becomes a man's wife, she has no freedom until her death; her husband can marry several women and live with them in her presence, and if she is in her husband's home while they have misunderstandings, the wife can only demand food from her husband, she doesn't have the right to compel him to satisfy her sexual desires.

It cannot be said that laws and religion are alone responsible, but because of women's acceptance the situation has become entrenched. Just as people who are termed 'lower caste' due to centuries-old tradition accept that they are low and rush to bend, hide or make way, likewise, even women think that they are the property of men, meant to be under the control of men and that they should not become the object of men's anger. Therefore, they are not concerned about their own freedom. If women really want freedom, the concept of chastity that deals a different justice to each sex must be destroyed and an equal, self-governing concept of chastity for both the sexes must come into place. Forced marriages, where people are tied to loveless places for chastity's sake, must be destroyed.

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Cruel religions and laws, which dictate women to bear with the husband's beastly actions for the sake of chastity, must be destroyed.

Even the social cruelty that for the sake of chastity one should hide the real love and affection arising in one's heart and live with a man for whom one feels no love or affection should be shattered.

Therefore, one can observe true chastity, natural chastity, and independent chastity among the people only when these cruelties are removed and never through compulsions, a different canon for the two sexes, and commandments written by the mighty for the weak that produce only slavish chastity and enforced chastity. Moreover, I would say that there is no other abominable act in human society when compared to this cruelty.

(*Kudiarasu,* 08-01-1928)

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2. Valluvar and Chastity

One of our comrades has written a long rebuttal to our essay on chastity supplementing his arguments with quotes from the Thirukkural.

In that essay, we had written, "If Valluvar was a woman and had written the Thirukkural, (s)he would not have mentioned such ideas." Our comrade accepts our opinion to a certain extent, but he refutes us saying, "Because a selfish group does not accept it, will justice become injustice?"

He has referred to women as 'a group with selfish interests': does it mean justice has been done to them? Isn't it selfish when men enter into writing about what is right for women? These questions should be pondered upon. He writes, "The women icons of Tamil Nadu have accepted this concept". (Here, he doesn't mention what the 'concept' is!)

If any woman icon has accepted that she is a slave of men, or that she is inferior to men, or that womanliness is at

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least an infinitesimal bit inferior to manliness—we will never call them women icons.

Our comrade says that we have blamed women by our statement that "Women have accepted such notions because of centuries-old traditions"—and our effort to compare this with the Depressed Classes who have accepted their depressed social position. He argues, "The Depressed Classes became ignorant because they were denied the means to develop their intelligence. This will not apply to women."

It doesn't appear as if he has said this statement after some research. We fail to understand why our comrade doesn't realize that women have been denied the means to develop their intelligence, subordinated and suppressed simultaneously by the same group of people who created the category of Depressed Classes and denied them the means to develop their intelligence.

Further, he cites Avvai as an instance of women's intelligence. If he had cited Valluvar in the same breath, he would have to accept that even among the Depressed Classes someone had intelligence. So, we want him to come to terms with the fact that we are not talking about one or two women icons, but about 99.75% of women. If it is said that we are blaming women by our statement, can we draw a parallel conclusion and say that our comrade has blamed the Depressed Classes?

He also claims that Avvai herself shields Thiruvalluvar and to this end, he quotes her maxim, "*Thaiyal Sorkelel*" (Don't listen to women) and says that this in tune with Valluvar's ninety-first chapter 'Being Led by Women'. He also quotes Avvai's maxim, "*Pedhaimai enbadhu maatharkku*

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anikalam" (Ignorance is the ornament of women). Therefore, one has to concede that our comrade has hurled his last weapon. Anyone who accepts that women are human beings endowed with reason and thinking capacity can never accept these three sayings to be the statements of an impartial person, or of some intellectual who has researched the truth. One should have at least said that such statements were intended for those times. We know that our readers will feel a little uncomfortable at this juncture, it isn't wrong.

First, there is a myth that Valluvar and Avvai are brother and sister. According to that myth, they are two of the seven children born to a Pulayar woman, Aadhi and a Brahmin man, Bhagwan. Another specialty of this myth is that Aadhi and Bhagwan gave birth soon after they had sex, they abandoned the baby then and there, and moved on. There are many other related myths. Moreover, some people say that there were several Avvais.

If we put aside the religious myths and superstitions, not pay attention to who said these maxims and couplets, and instead consider them as mere sentences and apply our reason and understand their meaning (as we do to other sentences), we will obtain concepts that mean: "Don't listen to women", "Ignorance is the woman's ornament," that is, it suits their character, and "one shouldn't act according to a woman's wishes." Several pundits might hasten to write special commentary for these lines and philosophise it. But we all know that in this world it is rare to find words, writings, or sentences for which exceptional meanings and philosophical discourses cannot be attributed. So, intelligent people will not accept giving special import to these lines alone.

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Here, one shouldn't look into who said Avvai's maxims or Valluvar's couplets. They have been considered as the greatest of law-giving books and that is the reason why we have come forward to discuss them. The obstacle here is: would these major mistakes have been made by those who put forth such lofty philosophical doctrines of justice? If this weapon was going to be used for everything, it might sometime destroy the person who uses it.

Moreover, anybody could have said anything taking into consideration only the time, place and environment of their day; otherwise, it doesn't suit the current times to say, like the Brahmins, that everything was said by God and holds for all ages. Irrespective of what these two great people have said or the truth/falsity of the statements, one has to accept that these law-giving books were written in a period when Aryan domination was widespread.

First, we have to accept that the law-giving books in the name of Valluvar and Avvai, were created by mere mortals like us. We will know the truth if we disregard the above-mentioned assumption that they are endowed with divinity, that is, something greater than human nature. Otherwise it will create space for anybody to say anything. So, we can justify what they have said only if it is viewed in this manner. We can come to the conclusion that anybody living in that period of time could have only delivered such a kind of justice.

Nobody can have a difference of opinion over the fact that Kambar is a talented poet. But, because he sung the Ramayana [in Tamil] in the period of heightened Aryan influence when people cheered Aryan domination, he changed Valmiki's version, removed the vulgar portions in it and

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packed it with absolute rise and dominance to the Aryans in a manner that the people would celebrate. Even now, though several pundits possess intellectual maturity and mature thought, they are afraid of denying Aryan supremacy; they merely praise the Aryans. They might say that they aren't afraid of the Aryans, but they behave in this manner because they practice Aryan customs, read Aryan myths, pray to the gods created for Aryan supremacy, and sing and write in praise of the Aryan epics. So, what will these people do when they have grown up in this manner right from their childhood, accepted Aryanism through their bodies, through the very roots of their hair and filled their brains with the same? Therefore, it is better to conclude by saying that since they had purity and greatness, they had spoken in tune with their times. Instead, to say that it holds for all times is a mistake even if it is going to be met with dire consequences.

Next, our comrade has told a lot of unnecessary things about equality. Though there is no need for us to debate about it here, we can understand that he has escaped without saying anything concrete—about his ideology of equality—if we observe his final statement. He has said, "Equality between men and women means that women can get their rights and needs without hindrance from men, and men can get their rights and needs without causing hindrance or sorrow to women and lead a life where they help each other." But, in the same breath, he adds, "What are the rights of men? What are the rights of women? What are their individual needs? These have to be separately examined."

Here, the life breath of the essay is: "What are the rights of men? What are the rights of women?" Why should there

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be any difference between the two? When our comrade says that it is an altogether different matter, it only means that he is afraid to explain the inner truth in it.

Moreover, he has said, "Masculinity consists of bravery, strength, anger, leadership and femininity consists of love, sublimity, calmness and caring." Only this conclusion makes us understand that our comrade has come forward to take the brief for Thiruvalluvar and write a rebuttal to us.

Saying that strength, anger and leadership are men's inherent qualities and calmness, silence and caring are women's qualities is nothing else but saying that bravery, force, anger and leadership belong to the tiger and calmness, silence and caring belong to the goat. The women's rights we demand is that men should accept that women also possess bravery, strength, anger and leadership quality like men. Further, in our opinion both the sexes should have all the qualities mentioned by our comrade; only that would lead to the development of human society. There is provision in nature for both the sexes to be equal. But it has been changed artificially because of men's selfishness and conspiracy.

Just because women become pregnant for ten months and give birth to children, it doesn't mean that women's state has to be any different from men when it comes to bravery, anger, leadership and strength. Or just because men don't become pregnant and give birth to children, their love, calmness and caring will not be different from women.

If we are going to give real respect to the concept of true equality and if there is true love, it is certain that both the sexes will do everything in the same manner except child bearing.

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Further, they have given the meaning "woman with love" to the word "*tharkondal*"; it is just meant to protect Valluvar and doesn't do justice to the Thirukkural. Further, it is meaningless to say that there is nothing for a man to learn from a woman and only then the use of the word "*tharkondal*" is warranted.

Moreover, it is also inappropriate to say that 'worshipping' doesn't refer to man. If a man has the right to kill women, a woman should also have the right to kill men. If there is a compulsion that women should fall at men's feet, then men should also fall at women's feet. This is equal rights for men and women.

Anything else is selfishness and stupidity and not love.

Our comrade has said that Thiruvalluvar has mentioned about men's chastity also in the Thirukkural. Even if he has mentioned it, it is not similar to what has been applied for women. Our comrade has cited these couplets as instances where men's chastity is dealt with:

"Siraikaakkum kaapevan seiyum magalir
Nirakaakkum kaape thalai."

What is the use of guarded imprisonment?
Foremost is the self-guarded purity of women.

"Nirai nenjamillavar thoivaar piranenjir
Peni punnarbhavar thol."

Hollow hearts alone desire
The arms of whores with hearts elsewhere.

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Our comrade says that these have been said to stress the chastity of men. In our opinion these couplets were not written with that intention. That is the first couplet must mean, "There is no use of women remaining chaste due to guarding, women should be chaste by themselves."

In our opinion, the second couplet was written for men who have sex with prostitutes and not written for men who fall in love with other women and loaf with them. Though the word "*nirai*" (virtue) is found here, it is not obligatory for men. So, we can cite several such couplets from the Thirukkural to show that both the sexes are not given the same rules for chastity.

Finally we are duty-bound to thank our friend for the advice he has given us. As per his preference, we have only raised questions when faced with doubts in the books of great people. But in this issue of chastity, we don't have doubts about the couplets we have mentioned above, and moreover we also sought the opinion of a few experts in our favor.

Next, though our devotion to the Thirukkural and Thiruvalluvar might not exceed our comrade's devotion, we can say with all humility that it is not any less than his. There is a lot of supporting evidence. Otherwise, we don't bother the slightest bit about the last two couplets quoted by our comrade: "it is foolish to differ from the opinion of the majority," and two other couplets that say: "it is foolishness to find faults with great people." We are not worried because if anybody has the characteristic of speaking what he feels is right, he should be prepared not only for these two couplets, but also many such actions.

(*Kudiarasu*, 12-02-1928)

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3. Love

We are writing this essay to explain that there is no special element like *kadhal* (love) in a man-woman relationship which signifies something other than affection, desire and friendship. The world has attributed an extraordinary quality to the word 'love,' ingrained it into the minds of people and unnecessarily dimmed the purpose of men and women living together—consequently, for the sake of love, people lead a troubled life lacking pleasure and satisfaction. We seek to destroy this.

But, what is this 'love'? What is its power? How does it arise? How long does it remain? Under what circumstances does it arise? When does it disappear? What is the reason for such disappearance? If we deeply think over these topics, we will easily understand that love lacks substance, reality and certainness ; and the person who blows it out of proportion is foolish by nature.

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But, before we think on these lines we need to examine the questions: "In what sense is the word 'love' being used now? How is it being used in the world? What is the basis for this?" and then come to a conclusion.

Today, those who talk about love say:

"Love is not affection, desire or passion",

"affection, kindness, desire, passion, infatuation are different, love is different",

"it arises for a special purpose between a man and a woman and cannot be described directly",

"it arises naturally between two people",

"there is nothing in this world equivalent to such love",

"it can exclusively exist for a man towards one woman, and vice versa",

"if such a love arises between two people, it would never change at any point of time for any reason",

"if love happens with somebody else at a later period, it can't be love, it can only be prostitution, it will never become love"

and that,

"if true love happens with one person, then desire or passion or infatuation will not arise in the case of any other person."

Moreover, because of this love, they have made a rule that a husband should live only with one wife and that a wife should live only with one husband, and they compel people to follow it. Irrespective of the advantages, we feel that people who speak in such a manner lack experience and worldly wisdom, they don't know about human nature or truth, or perhaps they know the truth, but they are concealing it for a specific purpose.

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Moreover, we want to add that if a majority of people are living as lovers today, it is because they were brought together as a couple by others for the purpose of child-bearing, assistance in the household, and a solution for natural desires. It is rare to see them coupled because of their excessive love or joined together by the God of Love. Further, we want to add that a man or a woman or a third party has absolutely no right to discuss or decide about another man or woman's affection, desire, love, sex, friendship, kindness, passion, infatuation and so on.

If one were to speak frankly, bravely and with human nature, freedom, tendency and experience, it has to be said that all these are similar to a man going to his favourite hotel and eating there, buying his favourite snack in a shop; that is, it is related to individual taste and satisfaction and other people's interference is indicative of impertinence and unnecessary domineering behaviour.

So much of greatness and decoration is given to love. What is it? How does it arise and disappear? If one thinks over it, it would appear right to everybody. Putting aside the question as to whether the word *kadhal* is a Tamil word or a Sanskrit word, even if we assume that it is a Tamil word, we are unable to find any synonym for it apart from affection, desire, longing, friendship, kindness and affinity between a man and a woman. We are also not able to find instance of its usage in any other manner.

Moreover, if we put aside the above meanings and look in the dictionary for the Sanskrit etymology of the word *kadhal*, only the words "murder, killing, stabbing or breaking" are given. Otherwise, if we look for it in chaste Tamil, it is only

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related to the union (or coming together) of man and woman, and affection, desire, friendship and kindness. Even if the word love is added to this list, we find that all these synonyms are used to explain each other and the word love doesn't seem to have any unique meaning. So, we are unable to understand the source or usage on the basis of which people claim that the word *kadhal* has some other meaning?

How does such love arise in a man/woman? Does it arise on its own accord? Or does it arise by the entry of a third person? If it arises on its own accord, one has to look into the circumstances and the basis on which it came into being. It cannot be easily said that it occurs out of any means other than the man and the woman meeting each other, or coming to hear about the other through a third person, or hearing/seeing in some manner the physical appearance, or behaviour, or character of the other person.

Even then, a man might fall in love with a woman, but she might not fall in love with him. Likewise, a woman might fall in love with a man, but he might not fall in love with her. Love arises just as the desire to own and possess an object arises in a man as soon as he sees/hears of/knows of it. We can't think of any other way. If one observes the mentality of lovers, he/she will understand that any love is caused only because of personal desire and search for individual satisfaction.

Anybody can love a man/woman only because of finding a source that satisfies their need or nature through beauty, or youth, or intelligence, or wealth, or education, or music, or features, or parental background, or usage for sexual needs and so on. When one falls in love for such reasons, he/she

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may be right or wrong. Either the quality might exist or it might have been a mere perception.

For instance, a man sees a woman strolling in a park. She observes this. They are instantly attracted. He inquires: 'Who are you?' The girl says she is a princess. Immediately the man falls in love. She asks him who he is and he says that he is the son of a servant. She feels humiliated and disgusted. This is a common occurrence.

What was the motive of the love that arose here? Suppose he doesn't say that he is a servant's son but says that he is the neighbouring country's prince, she falls deeply in love and feels that she shouldn't be separated from him even in her 'next birth'. Suppose she learns after four days that she has fallen in love with a servant's son and not a prince. Will her love be constant? Or should it remain constant? Trying to answer these questions will make one understand how love arises, and how it is annulled.

Likewise, what is the use of a man's love if he falls in love with a woman thinking that she is healthy and later comes to know that she is diseased, or a prostitute or a cheater, or that she isn't what he assumed her to be, or that she's detrimental to his welfare, satisfaction and desire? No matter how much it is tied up, can it remain unchanged? If one ponders this, one can understand 'the unsteady nature of true love.'

Does true love occur at first sight? Or does it happen after at least a few days of knowing each other? Which of these two loves is superior? Which love is better: falling in love from a distance without even observing the other's body, or falling in love after being satisfied with the person's features? If we

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pay attention to these, how can we answer that true love will not change because of physical change and incompatibility.

A man has fallen deeply in love, is his love supposed to be true only if it doesn't change even when he suspects (rightly or wrongly) that his beloved is in love with another? Is it a wrongful love if someone stops loving when he begins to suspect or feel unsatisfied?

When they fall in love, the lovers might share the same state, mindset, maturity, and aim. But these might naturally change in the course of time. Under such a circumstance should they adjust with each other for the sake of love and live eternally drowned in dissatisfaction and sorrow? This will prove that love is weak and useless.

Suppose both the lovers turn ascetics and saints, will it be against love for them to leave and dislike each other? If it is against love, what is the use of such love? If it isn't against love, what about the scenario where one of them renounces worldly pleasures and becomes an ascetic and leaves the other? Is that against love? One can understand the truth about love, if they pay attention to this question.

Generally speaking, it is natural for human beings to look at and think of a particular thing and desire it, but have liking and kindness towards many. Likewise, it is natural for human beings to become frustrated with anything, to hate it and part from it. Is it not natural to get fooled at moments of weakness, to try to rectify the mistakes when we have become stronger, to get bonded when we are inexperienced and to try to get liberated when we have gained experience?

We shall see the example of a youth who is tricked into falling in love with a prostitute. He gives away all his wealth

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to her. What do we call the youth's feeling towards the prostitute: love or lust? Or do we call it a fraud that took place because of his lack of intelligence? Sometimes, the same prostitute might dislike her profession and want to spend the rest of life with him permanently. So, what is the feeling of this prostitute towards the youth: love or a means to a comfortable way of living? If the youth is unaware of it, and keeps increasing his affection towards her, will it become mutual love? If we analyse it in this manner, we will understand that love is nothing more special than desire, sexual passion, affection, infatuation, friendship, foolishness, inexperience, and disappointment.

Because a lot of things have been imagined about love and fed into men and women, they too think that they have to put on an act to show that they are true lovers.

Here's a similar case: Because it has been said that pious people behave in such-and-such a manner, a lot of people (who want others to call them pious) apply sacred ash on their bodies, keep visiting temples continuously, sing songs and cry, and always murmur '*Siva Siva*', '*Rama Rama*'.

Likewise, when children keep their eyes shut and pretend as though they are sleeping, elders test the child by saying "if someone is sleeping, their legs will move" and the child feels that others should believe that it is sleeping; therefore it begins shaking its legs slightly. Because it has been said that chaste women only look at their toes when they walk, women who want to be considered chaste, put up such an act and walk exactly in that manner.

If it is said that true lovers will behave only in such a manner, a definition for true love is drawn up, even the lovers

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will behave accordingly and display their love. Precisely for this reason, they behave very pretentiously. If I were going to describe it, then this article would become extremely lengthy. Therefore, we consider that there is nothing called love which is different from desire, affection and friendship, that desire, affection and friendship are nothing but the same whether they are directed by human beings towards non-living objects or other living creatures, and that these feelings arise because of familiarity, behaviour, character, temperament, need and desire; and is subject to change when there is change in that intelligence, behaviour, character, temperament, need and desire; and when there is such change, affection and friendship too have to change and they are prone to change.

I am not trying to say that love (that is affection, desire and friendship) shouldn't exist, or that I haven't felt it.

We have written this article to highlight that affection, desire and friendship and anything else exists only for mental pleasure and satisfaction, and not for displaying the existence of affection, desire and friendship when there is no mental satisfaction and pleasure. We had to write this because we wanted to expose the impertinent, irresponsible people who enter other people's satisfaction and happiness and keep saying "this is not love", "that is against love", "that is sexual craving", "this is prostitution" and so on.

(*Kudiarasu*, 18-01-1931)

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4. The Right to Divorce

Nowhere in the world does a system of cruelty in marriage exist as it does in our nation. All our marriage principles merely aim at the enslavement of women by men. Various rituals are performed only to hide that enslavement. We punish women by giving the false name of divine marriage to such a meaningless ritual. Any impartial, unprejudiced person will accept that not only the women in our country, but all over the world are made to suffer unnatural cruelty and compulsions in the matter of marriage. But in this issue, our nation is worse than any other nation in the world.

We can firmly say that if these atrocities are going to continue, the ritual of marriage and family kinship would disappear within a short time, say within half a century. That is why the intellectuals of other countries are day-by-day diluting the difficulties that women have to undergo. Only our country remains in the vice-like grip of orthodoxy, so a

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women's agitation that totally reverses the prevailing scenario is urgently required.

When we passed a resolution in the Chengalpet Self Respect Conference last year that men and women should have the right to free themselves from a marriage and when we recently passed a resolution in the Chennai Self Respect Conference that a separate law was required for dissolution of marriages, several people, (including a few who call themselves social reformers) screamed as if the whole world had drowned. But after the Chengalpet resolution, laws for the annulment of marriage have been introduced in India and abroad. In Soviet Russia, marriage itself is thought of as a daily contract. It is well known that Germany has introduced a law that if the husband and wife don't want to live together, they can immediately annul their marriage without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Recently, the Government of the princely state of Baroda passed a law for the annulment of marriage. Such laws exist in other foreign countries. It is a matter of concern that only our nation is unconcerned in creating legislation in this regard. Everyday, we see news-items appearing in the papers that in the southern country, husbands have killed their wives on grounds of suspicion.

Sometimes, we even observe that several murders have taken place because of doubts about one woman. Anybody entrenched in godliness lacks the intelligence to think of why a marriage that is supposedly divine, ends in this manner.

It is highly important to make space for the annulment of marriages so that women are emancipated and acquire human nature, human rights and self-respect, and men

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should acquire satisfaction, pleasure, true love and morality.

Until this happens, there will be no space for real pleasure and an independent life for men and women.

Some of our 'reformists' cry hoarse if a man marries two wives. We don't know the intention behind their opposition. On religious grounds? On rational grounds? We don't understand their motives even a little. Or, we don't even know if they are saying this with a view of human morality. We will explain this at some other point of time.

But we want to pose a question to those who say that a man must not marry more than one wife. Is marriage for the pleasure and satisfaction of a man, or is it for a ritual? Suppose, a man gets a wife he doesn't like, isn't compatible, and doesn't even have sex with him, then, what is his duty? Similarly, what is the state of a woman who gets such a husband? If one thinks of how such deficiencies and mistakes can arise in marriages that are supposedly divine and inseparable, they can understand that divinity is a complete falsehood. This would prove that there is nothing divine about marriages. So, if a marriage annulment act does not come into place shortly in our country as in foreign countries, one has to campaign against marriage itself or campaign for polygamy for both married men and women.

We say that men who live without harmony, satisfaction or pleasure with their wife should bravely come forward and marry the woman they desire. Because only then, there will be an end to arranged marriages taking place in the name of divinity, where the man and woman are married without their consent or prior introduction. It would also put an end to the sorrow borne out of such arranged marriages.

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Why man is born and why he dies is an altogether different matter. As long as he is alive, he should experience pleasure and satisfaction. For this, a woman is a man's instrument and a man is a woman's instrument. If such an instrument is capable of giving sorrow and trouble, it is the foremost duty of every human being endowed with six senses to throw it off. People who work for human compassion, satisfaction and happiness of humanity should first take this up.

In our opinion, one shouldn't think, "Somehow we have got married, whatever happens we should bear it" and continue to experience sadness and dissatisfaction and force others to undergo the same. Because, doing so is nothing but way of life devoid of human nature and self-respect and never an act of intelligence.

(*Kudiarasu*, 17-08-1930)

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5. Remarriage Is Not Wrong

People have many misgivings on the issue: "Can a man remarry when he already has a wife?" People in the Self Respect Movement have the opinion/suspicion that doing such a remarriage is wrong. Even a vast majority of the public feel "that to remarry when one already has a wife is against the reformist doctrine."

Before we turn our attention to this question, we should understand the meaning of marriage. We consider marriage to be a contract arranged for the sake of convenience of the marrying couple. We also feel that the autonomy of both of them (either jointly, or individually) shouldn't be controlled by any tenets. A little understanding about the above question will arise if we decide whether such considerations are right or wrong. We are unable to know whether remarriage has been prevented anywhere in the world in the name of natural desire, experience or disciplinary policy, or as per the religion

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followed by the Tamils. We are also not aware of remarriage being banned by laws made in relation to marriage or by any religious doctrines.

There is provision to marry up to 60,000 women in Hinduism, up to four women in Islam and any number of women in Christianity. In Christianity alone, one can remarry only after annulling the current marriage, and that such an annulment can take place only subject to certain conditions; these restrictions have been created only as a social security measure and not in the name of any doctrine. This is the only difference between Christianity and other religions in the matter of marriage. Though they differ from each other in their conditions and plans, it doesn't appear as if any religion objects to the idea of remarriage. Moreover, religious evidence in Hinduism points to the fact that the gods themselves were polygamous. Further, Tamils and Hindus worship (through prayers and marriage ceremonies) these gods in the same state—with several wives and concubines.

Even Islam accepts the fact that Prophet Mohammed lived with more than one wife at the same time. So, those who oppose remarriage and those who blame such gods or the prophet can never claim to oppose remarriage in the name of their religion or religious diktats. So, if somebody claims to be a Hindu and comes forward to ask whether a man can remarry when he already has a wife, we should understand that he is putting forth such a question because he considers his rationality (on practical comfort) more important than his religion.

So, if we come to know that the person is asking this question not because he considers himself a Hindu but because

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he considers himself a rationalist or an experienced person, not only will we attain great happiness on that account, but we'll also not have any problem in explaining and establishing what is just to him.

Generally, nobody blames a man's remarriage when his first wife 1) has died, or 2) when it is known that she loves another man. Likewise, nobody objects when 3) she is suffering from an incurable, chronic disease. Nobody objects when 4) she is mad and has lost mental balance. So, rationalists and experienced people don't object to a remarriage not only in the first circumstance, but even in these three circumstances.

Let us now look at the fifth and sixth circumstance: 5) Let us assume that out of ignorance or unreasonable attitude, the wife doesn't bother about the husband and behaves in an inconsistent manner. 6) Let us assume that the husband doesn't satisfy her heart, or for some other reason, the wife doesn't have affection and love towards the husband and merely hates him. 7) Let us assume that apart from the above behaviour, she often runs away to her parental home. 8) Let us assume that the wife holds views totally opposed to the husband's, and that she behaves in such an obstinate manner that the husband always feels hurt. 9) Let us assume that because of an arrogance arising out of her wealthy status, she is not concerned about her husband. "What is the plight of the husband who is trapped with such a wife?" It is the important duty of those who ask questions (that is, people who believe in experience) to pay attention to such a situation.

Apart from this, if a 12 year-old boy and a 10 year-old girl were married off (by their parents and others) will these

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marriages be governed by the religions that the couple have to adhere to? Or will it be governed by the religions followed by those who arranged this wedding? This is an important issue that the rationalists (that is, those who ask such questions) must pay attention to.

All these reasons not withstanding, what is the duty of a husband if he gets a wife of such a type that he doesn't like her and he decides that she is absolutely useless when it comes to satisfaction and natural pleasures?

Those who believe in religious strictures, those who believe in experience, the rationalists and lay people should jointly look into this matter.

Finally, if someone puts this aside and thoughtlessly declares, "One should be tolerant and patient irrespective of everything. At no point of time should a man remarry when his wife is alive" he should explain on what doctrinal basis, for what necessity, in the pursuit of what kind of justice, following what goodness , and with what rationalism he has said so, or expects so.

Because, casually speaking, we observe that it has become highly common even for lay people who discuss any topic to debate whether it is compatible with *sruthi* (old sayings), *yukti* (tactics) and *anubavam* (experience). From these three words, we can observe that even if a concept is said to be right according to *sruthi* (opinions of the wise, experienced ones who lived before us), it has to be compatible with *yukti* (our rationalism)—that is why *yukti* has been placed second. Even if it is compatible with *yukti*, one has to check if it is compatible with *anubavam* (experience, practical feasibility)—therefore, *anubavam* has been accorded the third and final place.

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We are interested to know which of these three criteria does the concept of remarriage (when one already has a wife) fail to meet? Further, in a marriage we consider the bride to be a life-partner to the bridegroom. In such a situation if a bridegroom is matched with a bride who has the above-mentioned nine wrong behaviours, it is essential to first observe if she is actually a life-partner, or a life-problem?

Mere onlookers, who are unaware of the truth or the prevailing circumstances, can use the unwise nature of lay people as their support-base, and in an irresponsible, blindfolded manner say that it is not fair to remarry when one already has a wife. Anybody can say this statement. Anybody can say that it is unjust, cruel and unethical. We emphatically state that if a person has a mustard size of intelligence and uses either his reason or his intelligence, and thinks why he spoke, or thought like that, and why he entered into this, he will realize if such a marriage is wrong or if speaking in such a fashion is wrong.

Finally, it is the duty of those who seek true liberation and freedom to pay attention to whether a man has the competence to decide if he likes or dislikes something, and whether he should have (or not have) the right to do something? Or, do others have it? Doesn't he have the right to come to a conclusive decision in his personal matters?

Moreover, how can a man live in a place where there is no true love or affection and where one doesn't feel those emotions? Does a man marry a woman (and a woman marry a man) for love, desire, pleasure and satisfaction? Or, do they sacrifice love, desire, pleasure and satisfaction because they have got married? Any humane person should think about

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this. It is not easy to liberate the suffering people from superstitious practices and meaningless restrictions of the world. But, if it is said that these superstitious practices and blind beliefs are not followed by an establishment that was formed to destroy such restrictions and difficulties, one has to wonder if those who utter such blame possess any intelligence? When this organization (the Self Respect Movement) has been formed with such objectives, how else can its activities be? People should think from a neutral, straight perspective as to why one should protect principles that are opposed to any kind of rationalism, experience, freedom, happiness and satisfaction?

Let us pay attention to the discontent of the people within the Self Respect Movement on the issue of remarriage.

The annulment of marriage is one of the doctrines of the Self Respect Movement. A resolution was passed in the Chengalpet Conference in support of this and another resolution seeking promulgation of a law for annulment of marriage was passed in the Erode Conference. Therefore, it is settled that a married couple have the right to separate and get separated: the husband from the wife, or the wife from the husband.

This has been accepted as an ideology—now, if anybody, from any religion has legal hurdles in putting this into practice, should one keep suffering in the name of law? Or should we ignore the law and act according to what one feels is just? There can be no place for discontent in this regard.

For example, a few of the marriages that are done according to the Self Respect ideology may not be legally valid. We hear legal experts saying that 'inter-caste' marriages where

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the bride and the bridegroom belong to different castes, and marriages where superstitious and meaningless, unnecessary rituals are not held may not be legally valid. Though it might be so, we see many people ready to face everything because of their attachment to the ideology. They boldly get married ignoring the law and not bothering about the benefits that could be accrued out of it.

We don't feel that Self Respecters have ideological problems or problems of justice and fairness with such marriages. They might say that the remarriage took place without obtaining legal divorce from the first wife.

Let us pay attention to the fact that the Self Respect Movement supports a man marrying a second time as he continues living with his first wife. We cannot think of any fairness in compelling people's love and affection and making it subject to a condition that it should be in such a manner with such a person alone. Because love is a natural trait. Therefore, it is certainly a kind of slavery to prevent it for the sake of any compulsion. People who accept love and affection as natural behaviour say it should be free and true, so, it is contradictory to control it at any juncture or at any level. To come forward and say that love and affection must be directed only towards one person is against human tendency and natural philosophy.

But we don't deny that love and affection would have to come under a few constraints for the purpose of practical comforts, natural preventive action and the doctrine of social welfare. Moreover, it could have been controlled because of an agreement that should be followed, or it would have come under control on its own (because of excessive love). In such

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situations, there is no place for these questions. It is essential to leave such actions to an individual's wish.

In conclusion: If all such questions must altogether lose their relevance, the situation of women in general must improve. Because, the above questions arise on the basis of the concern, "If this remarriage happens, what will befall the earlier wife?"

There would be no place for the necessity to feel such sympathy or concern if women detesting their husbands are accorded the freedom and comforts that we have argued men should posses when they (for whatever reasons) detest their wife and find them disagreeable. As far as we are concerned, anything that has been said for men, applies to women as well. We feel that real freedom will come into existence for women only when women also possess what men possess, when they too behave like men, and when they too have the same rights and comforts as men in worldly life, society, laws, and religion. Only then they can attain real satisfaction, pleasure and love.

(*Kudiarasu*, 12-10-1930)

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6. Prostitution

The word prostitution is mostly used in the context of sex between man and woman. More importantly, if a woman has sex with a man (or several men) other than her husband, or the man who is keeping her as a concubine, or a man who is enjoying her presently on lease from some husband who is a pimp, these men and the public use this word to condemn her and thereby foist a major crime on her. But, they don't call it prostitution if the same woman is pimped to some other man by the husband or the man who is keeping her, in the name of his consent. Even if the public hears of this news, they will only curse and blame the woman and will mostly not blame the man to be a prostitute.

Moreover, such words of blame, abuses, curses and usages do not exist for men. There is no custom for calling a man a male-prostitute. Even if he is blamed in that manner, he doesn't get angry.

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When we closely study the practical philosophy behind the word 'prostitution' — we feel that the word merely signifies that women are nothing but slaves. This is because the 'sin of prostitution' and 'immorality arising out of prostitution' are applied only to women and never to men.

Let us cite an example: In our country, only women have been made outcaste; chased out of their homes; beaten, scolded and tortured; and sometimes even murdered on the charge of prostitution—we have never seen or heard of men being treated in this manner. Apart from this, we also see a few instances where prostitution adds self-importance and fame to men. We hear a few men talking proudly about it [their sexual exploits].

Even men get angry only if they are called son-of-a-prostitute and not if they are called son-of-a-male-prostitute. Men get angry if it is said that their wives, concubines or women on lease have committed prostitution. They also think that a great dishonour has befallen them. Further, a man flies into a rage if it is said that he has willingly prostituted his wife for the sake of selfish reasons or that he has let her prostitute herself because of his inability to control his wife. In the light of this experience, and the above illustration, it will be clearly seen that the word prostitute signifies that women are the slaves of men; they are the objects of men's lust and are mere commodities that can be sold for a price or rented out.

Apart from this, why is the word prostitute used only for women? If we pay attention to why that word was not used against men—another truth will come to light. That is, the word 'prostitution' is not inherently a bad word that signifies

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a real crime. That is, just as the word 'chastity' and the method of its usage are false and created with the intention of enslaving women, likewise, the word prostitution and its usage are false and created with the intention of enslaving women. We will also understand that it is against nature.

Ordinarily, words like 'chastity' and 'prostitution' are not necessary for a life filled with freedom and equality. These words don't have even a little relevance to natural behaviour. It might be essential only for a life-agreement. Even so, everybody has to accept that it is against nature. This is evidenced by the fact that the philosophy of both these above-mentioned words are imposed only on women and not on men. Moreover, men are not afraid of it, they are not ashamed of it, they are not controlled by it and they are not bothered about it.

Another evidence is that both the sexes do not instinctively feel that chastity shouldn't be compromised and prostitution shouldn't be indulged in.

Why should people have feelings and emotions against chastity and in favour of prostitution in spite of several people preaching against it, the formation of many rules, the display of repercussions, and the opportunity of witnessing at least a few people suffer due to beatings, rivalry, murders, ill-health arising due to these?

We will automatically understand that the words chastity and prostitution are totally false and were created out of the selfish conspiracy to treat other people as slaves if we look at the complete truth by taking into consideration the way of life in tune with nature, we maintain an impartial point of view (devoid of attachment to ones nation, the prevailing customs

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or ones origin) and if the feelings and desires that arise in our hearts are taken as an example. Further, we shall provide an illustration to prove that prostitution is only against a man's right of possession and the control he has created and it is not against true morality.

In Kerala, there is a custom of two or three men making a woman their wife. Only when this woman has sex with another man (apart from these two or three men), that too in the period when she is their wife, it is considered as prostitution and at times this has even resulted in murders.

Further, among a few sections having sex with people outside their tribe is alone considered to be prostitution. Even in our country, among a few communities, having sex with the husband's brothers or his father is not considered as prostitution. Here, we can obviously see instances of this practice mixed with the customs of the societies living in areas largely inhabited by the indigenous tribes. Likewise, there are several issues. If we pay proper attention, we will understand that prostitution is not used/ implemented at any point of time as a concept of general immorality based upon a particular doctrine.

Moreover, we do not totally object to the fact that a few control measures and morals should be created for the human society. But, we should keep in mind that they are created for individual relationships: rules governing relationships such as master-slave, master-servant, proprietor-clerk, friendship and companionship, and life partnership cannot exist as general principles for public life. The principles created for public life should not hinder the freedom of any layperson and it shouldn't have any concept of difference such as

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partiality or hierarchy in its use and most importantly, it should conform to nature.

They should not hamper the legitimate rights and freedom of others. One need not search the legal treatises to know what is legitimate. If someone claims something as his legitimate right and another person comes along and claims the same to be his legitimate right as well, one should look out for the first man's reaction to see if he accepts the second man's claim. It should be similar for both of them. Moreover, it should also be suitable and essential in the light of intelligence, feasibility and experience.

Instead, if the powerful and the cunning create compulsory rules and regulations (which happen to be dishonest and unacceptable to intelligence and experience) according to their whims and fancies, it won't yield any benefit. Apart from creating unnecessary problems for humanity, it would also create slavishness and intellectual obstacles.

Let us consider the characteristic of 'thieving' that a man in public life shouldn't have. We also accept that in today's world, it causes hardship and sadness to the man who had lost due to theft (we have similar feelings if someone steals our property). But if we look at why that loss and difficulty arise, it is because the man who has lost feels that the stolen object belongs to him.

Until economic equality is established in the world, the habit of thieving will only be considered a criminal offence. "All the property in the world belongs to everybody. Everyone should labour for his food. Nobody should have more than his/her needs"—if such doctrines come into place—theft,

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as well as worry on account of the stolen object, will automatically disappear.

But, to say "It is not a crime if I steal, it is a crime only if you steal; it is not a crime if I lie, it is a crime only if you lie; it is not a crime if I prostitute, it is a crime only if you prostitute"—such morals and public regulations will not be of any use to public welfare, equality and freedom.

Today, in the world in general, and in our nation in particular, morality, control and virtues are mostly opposed to nature, supportive of slavishness and have been created because of the selfish conspiracy of a few people.

Finally, thinking capacity, bodily senses and desire are human tendencies. Because of our ability to feel, we notice that hunger, sleep and sex are essential, important natural craving. Because of the senses, we see the essential and important natural craving that arise out of touch, taste, sight, smell and hearing.

So, the capability to think and the bodily senses keep on creating desire in man. Therefore, we are able to see that it has become a tendency to desire anything, and in most cases keep lusting for more and more limitlessly.

So, thoughts, sense organs and desires cannot be controlled easily and if it has been controlled by anybody, we are not going to discuss them here. Also, what we are discussing here doesn't involve them. Perhaps, such people are one in a million! But if rules are created to control the thoughts, senses and desires of ordinary human beings (who are unlike these exceptions), will it have any currency? What is the necessity even otherwise? Shouldn't we pay attention to this?

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We say that lies shouldn't be uttered. We say that telling lies is a sign of weak character. But those who make a profession out of lying, those who casue difficulties and losses to others through their lies—lawyers and merchants are accepted in society without any kind of indignity. We also treat them with honour because of the wealth and fame they have gained in their profession.

But people belonging to a similar profession, the *devadasis* are considered low.

The human society faces harm and loss because of these three categories of people; yet, to accept two of them and reject the third is indecent, devious and selfish. Is there any justice in it? Irrespective of the profession, if it harms others we should ensure that the world runs without it. It might be necessary to change what is natural and introduce regulations in such matters alone. Instead, to make it exclusive would serve no purpose.

So, prostitution and its underlying doctrine cannot be accepted because it seeks to enslave women, it has been built on the concept that women are slaves and it is totally unrelated to men. If prostitution is going to be an obstacle to the efforts undertaken for women's freedom and women's liberation, it is the duty of the truly persevering persons to daringly cast it away and move forward.

(*Kudiarasu*, 26-10-1930)

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7. The Plight of Widows

Political reformers are waging a struggle to ensure that Indians get the power to govern themselves; social reformers are working to eradicate the communalist and casteist differences in the Indian society; but we observe that nobody is having sufficient concern about the suppression of women.

Intelligent people will not deny that men and women (being humans) are not inferior to each other in natural attitudes and social life. Is it possible to observe differences (except the physical differences) either in terms of intelligence or bravery between men and women? It is impossible. Both among men and women, there are intelligent and brave persons, as well as stupids and cowards. Under such circumstances, is it fair and just for arrogant mankind to degrade, humiliate, enslave and torture womankind? Of the many cruelties practiced by Hindu men on the women of their religion, here we shall pay attention only to the widows.

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Even a ripe old man who has become tired of the worldly pleasures would attempt to remarry once his wife is dead. That too, he would select a beautiful young virgin girl for his wife. Whereas, even though she might not have tasted any worldly pleasure, if a woman (even if she is a 16-year-old beauty) loses her husband she must tightly shut away all her natural desires for a lifetime and die in dejection and sadness. What an injustice! It is very regrettable that the so-called Hindus passively watch their society being unjustly destroyed in this manner. In short, it is a kind of social suicide.

In ancient days, it was a practice to reduce the widow to ashes by making her climb her husband's funeral pyre. This sati system was eradicated as a result of the monumental efforts taken by Warren Hastings, William Bentinck and Indian intellectuals like Raja Rammohan Roy. When there were protests in those times against this practice, traditionalists undertook large-scale agitations alleging that Hindu tradition would be destroyed and the religion would come to ruin. But in the course of time, their screaming subsided and the murderous practice of *Saga-dhaganam*, or the sati system fully disappeared from India.

But now, the custom that prohibits widows from remarriage is crueler than the sati system. Becoming a sati is one day's sorrow; whereas living as a widow is a lifetime's unbearable sorrow similar to torture. Will it be an impartial, righteous action to say that an old man who has lost his wife can remarry, whereas a young childless widow (who hasn't enjoyed family life) shouldn't remarry?

To say that a widow's remarriage will ruin her chastity is absolutely inappropriate. Any experienced person will know the truth that danger befalls the widows' chastity only because

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they are not remarried. If a woman becomes a widow, will the natural desire arising in her heart fade away? How can young women suppress their natural sexual desire? Irrespective of the obstacles they place, there is no way in which they can overpower nature, so they will fall into bad ways, become pregnant illegally, become guilty of the sin of infanticide and they become victims of endless infamy. Who is responsible for this crime? Certainly, the people of the widowed girl's community who forcefully confine her from remarrying are guilty of the crime. If there are widows who don't want to remarry, let them be. Let us deal with them later. It is our demand that those widows who want to remarry should be generously given in marriage.

People may have a doubt: If I, who support widow remarriage through my writings and speeches, support it in actual practice. Therefore, I want to talk of instances that reflect my actions.

I belong to the Karnataka Balija Naidu caste. The women of my caste are supposed to follow the purdah system and the widows are not allowed to remarry. The family I was born into were ultra-orthodox and strict Vaishnavaites. Right from my seventh year, I used to mock people who talked about caste differences and untouchability. I have never hesitated to touch anybody or consume food that somebody had touched. I was not allowed into the family kitchen even at a very young age. If there was a jug I had used, nobody (except my father) used it without washing it first. Those who were jealous of the orthodoxy and tradition of my family attained peace of mind on seeing me. They would mock that for all his orthodoxy the Naicker has got a gem of a son. When

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I was 16, I used to think it was male arrogance that made them train women separately and bring them up with a lot of control.

My younger sister died having given birth to a daughter named Ammayi and a son. When Ammayi was 10 years old, we celebrated her marriage pompously. On the 60th day following her marriage, her husband, who was a 13-year-old boy, died of diarrhoea. On hearing the news the girl-child came running to me and started crying loudly, "Uncle, did I ask you to get me married? Why did you throw such a huge stone on my head?" She suddenly fell at my feet with such a force that her head was wounded when it hit the floor. Some 600 or 700 people who had gathered for the funeral saw that child and me and started crying up streams of tears. Even I started crying uncontrollably. But when I lifted that girl up, I resolved that I would get her married again.

Later, one year after that girl attained puberty, my brother-in-law and I started taking efforts to arrange her marriage. When this news reached my parents and others, they considered it a great danger to their community, became very worried and they even disturbed and sent away one or two bridegrooms we had chosen. Finally my brother-in-law managed to convince his second wife's brother to marry her. I ensured that the girl and the boy were taken to Chidambaram without anybody's knowledge (the bridegroom was taken through the Chennai route and the girl was taken through the Tiruchi route), their marriage was performed in the temple and they were brought back to the village. But I could not go to Chidambaram and I had to stay in the village. If I had also gone, they would have got suspicious and

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somehow tried to prevent the marriage. Because of this marriage there was a split between the relatives for one or two years because they had broken caste rules and only later they patched up.

The couple lived together and had a son. But unfortunately, even the second husband died sometime later. Only the mother and son survived, and live happily. Though I finalized that marriage having crossed several obstacles, even now there are a few widowed children younger than 13 years in my community. It is pathetic to see these children being treated like untouchables by their parents.

Whenever I thought of widows, or saw their sufferings directly, I used to think, "this isn't worldly nature, but the mighty subjugating, oppressing and harassing the weak." It is possible to assume that the Hindu community might have been regulated at some point of time under somebody's dominance, or it might have lacked method; and the regulations would have been formed naturally, and the mighty would have modified it to suit their selfish needs. Yet, it is my vehement opinion that at some point of time the Hindu religion and the Hindu community will be totally destroyed because of the permanency of widowhood.

Majority of those who talk about politics, sociology, popular reform and women's emancipation are doing it for the sake of their livelihood, fame and personal benefit. I request you to pardon me for saying that those who truly work with real sympathy towards the widows are among the rarest of the rare cases. I have come to realize that a majority of those who are seen to work in these fields and in reforms, lack the resolute belief that what they are doing is right, they merely

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advertise themselves as working in these issues for the sake of the world.

Those who speak about women's liberation and women's emancipation mostly keep the women of their house within purdah; and those who speak about widow remarriage zealously guard the widows of their homes and protect their widowhood; they do not practice even a little of what they preach. If one researches why this happens, it is because when they just think of women, they get the feeling that women are slaves, they are subservient to men and that they should be kept under control. Therefore they feel proud in suppressing and oppressing women. That is why many people treat women like animals.

When men just think of giving freedom to women, they consider themselves to be doing a major sinful act that should never be done. Does this not mean that one half of humanity lacks freedom right from birth? Women (who are equal in number to men) are enslaved and made to suffer without freedom for the simple reason that men are physically a little stronger than women. This doctrine applies everywhere; that is why the strong enslave the weak. If the doctrine of slavery has to be abolished in human society, it is essential to destroy male arrogance and cruelty that is responsible for treating women as slaves. Only then the tender sprouts of equality and freedom will bud forth. The first step towards this should be the creation of the right of remarriage for widows.

Even the national dictator, caste-frenzied and orthodox comrade Gandhi has spoken and written sympathetically on several occasions about Hindu widows.

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The truth will be known if we read the *Navjeevan* newspaper of 1925. Some excerpts from his essay:

> "It is my firm belief that there is nothing in the world that goes more against nature than enforcing child widows to remain widows. The concept of widowhood is not dharma in any sense of the word. The life of enforced widowhood is a sin. If anybody says that a fifteen-year-old child widow is living as a widow by her own choice, it only shows the cruel nature and ignorance of the speaker."

Comrade Gandhi writes about widow remarriage with passion and vigorous agitation:

> "The widows must calmly and courageously reveal their real feelings to their parents or guardians. If they do not pay heed, the widows can marry a man of integrity by themselves. If the widow's guardians do not give heed, they will have to pay the consequences in later days. Because, I only find improper conduct in everybody. By forcibly preventing the widows and making them follow widowhood, no good will ever come to the widows, or to the family, or to the dharma of widowhood. With my own eyes, I am seeing the destruction of these three categories. Child widows! You and the men and women who force you to live as widows should realize this!"

Moreover, my heart trembles when I look at the number of Hindu child widows as per the 1921 census.

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Infant widows younger than 1 year	597
1 – 2 year old child widows	494
2 – 3 year old child widows	1,257
3 – 4 year old child widows	2,837
4 – 5 year old child widows	6,707
Total (widows under 5 years)	11,892
05 – 10 year old child widows	85,037
10 – 15 year old child widows	2,32,147
15 – 20 year old child widows	3,96,172
20 – 25 year old child widows	7,42,820
25 – 30 year old child widows	11,63,720
Total number of widows	26,31,788

Moreover, such widowhood is a great blow to our population growth. If just one or two Hindus are converted to another religion, the Hindus think that a great misfortune has befallen them and feel pathetic. What is the reason? Because they think that the reduction of two people from their religion causes a great difficulty and loss to Hinduism, so they feel such sadness and sorrow.

If the 26, 31, 788 widows of our nation (now the number might be approximately five lakhs more) are going to get married and lead a family life, how many children would they beget? Even if we assume that two-thirds of the women will give birth to one child every two years, there would be 87, 726 children at the beginning and within ten years there would be 4, 38, 630 new babies—we are preventing the birth

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of so many citizens. Those who think that a great loss has been incurred due to one or two people undergoing religious conversion do not understand the significance of this.

I shudder to hear that 11, 892 widows are actually tender kids less than 5 years of age, and that there are 2, 32, 147 widows less than 15 years of age who are forced to suppress their natural desires.

Which civilized world will accept such a heinous cruelty of widowhood? For the past hundred years, several intellectuals like Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, the Kolhapur Maharaja, Surendranath Bannerjee, Veeraesalingam Panthulu, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Vemanna and Sir Gangaram have struggled to remove the hardships of widows. Even now, several Punjabi leaders are working in this field of reform.

India, which was in a deep slumber on the issue of widows, has slowly started to awaken and has come forward to support widow remarriage; a few people are campaigning in its favour and small booklets are being published in support of widow marriage —these can be taken as good omens.

Taking into consideration the welfare of the nation, social progress and human compassion, Tamil people should abandon their sluggish attitude and vigorously come forward to form associations for widow remarriage; they should campaign and publish pamphlets in order to destroy the cruelty of widowhood.

(*Kudiarasu*, 22-08-1926)

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8. Property Rights

In India, there exist several cruelties—unacceptable to humanity, justice and rationalism—which cannot be found anywhere else in the world. There are two major, important cruelties that need to be solved immediately so that people of the world don't consider Indians as barbarians and instead consider Indians as a humane and civilized society qualified to protect, govern and rule their own nation without the help of foreigners.

First among these cruelties is that many communities (numbering several crores) among the Indian people are considered untouchable by birth, treated worse than irrational animals and more disgracefully than worms and insects. The second is the practice of considering Indian women as unfit for independence right from their birth, saying that they were created by 'God' himself to be the slaves of men, and treating them like walking corpses.

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These two things shouldn't remain in India for even half a second more. Until these above-mentioned cruelties are destroyed, it is impossible to demand complete independence for India, or to say that the Indian people will look after India's defence and governance themselves or that Indians don't need any relation with foreign countries. If somebody says that it is possible, we would label it a selfish conspiracy lacking integrity. We don't have any fear or doubt in saying so, that's why we oppose such foolish and devious efforts.

We don't consider a section of our people as belonging to our society, as our brothers, or even with compassion. We deny them the freedom that we long for. We don't even consider them as human beings. We enslave, torture, humiliate and subjugate them. Therefore, to handover the welfare and liberation of these depressed people to us would be akin to handing over goats to the butcher: it cannot equal anything else.

We observe that a few people who have been oppressed as untouchable, and the women who have been enslaved and denied any freedom don't understand this philosophy, they don't take into consideration the atrocities and disgraces done to them, and instead participate in shouting for 'Indian independence and freedom'. We feel that they move about in ignorance because they don't know the meaning of true freedom and liberation, and they've been kept in an ignorant condition which make them unable to know its meaning.

If one thinks about the atrocity and cruelty of untouchability, ones heart never allows one to forgive it, or to carelessly disregard it, or to postpone by saying "let us look at it tomorrow, what is the urgency now?"

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We sometimes feel that the Manu Dharmic atrocities undergone under the present British Government aren't enough to a make a man practicing untouchability realize the real difficulties of those untouchables. The people who torture untouchables will begin to feel and mend their ways only under a tyrannous military regime devoid of all freedom or equality.

But, irrespective of the extent of disgrace and torture [by a tyrannous government], it isn't easy to make such people realize the real difficulties because India is not only surrounded by cruelty and the lack of integrity, but it is also under the embrace of stupidity and superstition.

Yet, there is enough evidence to provide us the hope that the situation will change.

Next, even in the matter of women their freedom and feelings have been tied up. This cruelty shows that Indians don't have the feelings of freedom and it is evident that they are the children of slaves.

Indian freedom fighters, swadeshis, nationalists and those fighting for the rights of people's welfare, don't have any real concern about these two issues—moreover, 90% of them are selfish frauds who don't take any effort and sometimes even oppose and place obstacles to efforts undertaken by these two oppressed categories of people.

Indications of a possible solution to the problems of these people makes us little a happy. That is, the princely states in India (Mysore, Baroda, Kashmir and Thiruvananthapuram) have taken more steps to put an end to these cruclties when compared to the British Government in India, or the reformers in British India.

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We have mentioned earlier that in the princely state of Kashmir, a resolution has been passed banning the practice of untouchability in any form; and the so-called untouchable class has been given all rights like the others, and it has been resolved to give their children free education and food at the schools.

Moreover, we have also written earlier that the princely state of Travancore has liberally thrown open its temples, streets and ponds to the so-called untouchables and vested them with the rights that others enjoy; and has also implemented an act banning the prostitution of women in the name of God and with the support of the temples.

Now, the princely state of Mysore debated the idea of granting property rights to women. The Government and the people's representatives accepted it and a committee was formed for that purpose. In its report, the committee unanimously accepted the concept of bestowing property rights upon women and sent a report which has been published in all the dailies.

The important parts of the report are:

1. It is cruel and unjust to say that women lack the status to enjoy the rights to become heirs/inheritors.

2. When women have the rights and capacity to attain *stridhanam* and donation; and when they can manage these, why don't they have the status to become inheritors of ancestral property?

3. The denial of inheritance rights to women is not only an

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obstacle to the development of women but it is also a bane to Hinduism.

4. Therefore, the time has come to make laws regarding this, and to decide that any civil right cannot be denied to women because they happen to be women.

5. Women have the right to dispose off any kind of *stridhanam* property as they will.

It is highly commendable that the committee has also recommended for the grant of freedom to women on a few other matters: That is, "if the husband suffers from venereal disease, or a horrible, communicable disease, or if he has a concubine, or has the practice of visiting courtesans and prostitutes, if he has married again, tortures her, or if he converts to another religion, the wife has complete rights to separate and claim maintenance from him."

It is also observed that a Bill has been prepared in support of the above-mentioned matters.

Therefore, it is possible to believe that quite soon this law might be passed in the Legislative Assembly of the princely state of Mysore. It is worthy to note, and praise, the fact that they have accepted the doctrine of property rights (though there are some disparities in the size of property distribution) and also the right of separation from the husband.

As we have seen, the Hindu princely states in India are coming forward to make legislations in every field, whereas the nationalists, freedom fighters and welfare activists in British India have not even thought about the importance

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and the need for pertinent laws to be made with regard to these issues. This is a clear indication of the irresponsibility and lack of integrity of this group of people.

The Sarada Act (Prevention of Child Marriage Act) was passed because of the benevolence of the British Government. Yet, it is shameful that this Act hasn't been effective because Indian nationalists and swadeshis have placed obstacles to its implementation. It is highly shameful that those who vowed to debate and destroy that Act were sent as our representatives to the national, provincial and state legislative assemblies.

Our nationalists, that is politicians, don't pay attention to such activities. But if we campaign for these issues, they either label it "anti-national", or say that they "will make a law after the attainment of independence." And if somebody takes a bill pertaining to these topics to the assembly, they say, "Reform is not possible through legislation, but it must be done only through propaganda." They cheat the people through such tactics and cause delay.

So, if we think about what is our first duty in such circumstances, we will realize the need to remove the right that men should be the ones to undertake efforts for such work. Our women should enter such activities in full vigour. Women's agitation should at first be directed to attaining property rights like men.

If women have property rights, all the discomforts that they face will be eliminated. If one observes how much of freedom the lowly prostitutes enjoy in their families and in their community because of possessing property rights, they will understand how family women will lead superior lives if they have property rights.

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Moreover, no one has ever given a reason why women are not granted property rights. If parents provide education and a profession to women, they will acquire the power to earn property. Later, they might be able to select their husbands, or live a life of independence with the husband selected by their parents.

It is our opinion that of the many reasons why a woman is enslaved, the most important reason is that she lacks the right to property. Therefore, it is very important and urgent for women to come forth liberally and courageously and agitate for their property rights.

(*Kudiarasu*, 05-10-1930)

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9. Birth Control

Many people were shocked when we wrote about birth control a few years ago. But now it has become a casual topic that can be discussed anywhere. It is gaining popularity. We observe in the papers that Sir P.Sivaswamy Iyer (who previously held an influential position), Justice Ramesam and several others speak and write in favour of birth control. Our readers might be aware that recently the need for a campaign on birth control was discussed in the Madras Legislative Council.

But there is a basic difference between ourselves and others because of the reasons we impute to stress the need for birth control. We say that birth control is essential for women to attain liberation and independence. Others advocate contraception on the basis of problems of women's health, well-being of the children, the economy of the nation, the partitioning of ancestral property and so on. Several people

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in the Western countries support this. But in our opinion, none of these are the primary factors why birth control needs to be practiced.

As we have said earlier, we recommend women to stop having children because pregnancy is an enemy to the freedom and liberation of women. Not only that, because of having many children, even men are unable to live with autonomy, courage, and independence. The truth of this comes to light when a man or a woman casually speaks of the reasons why his/ her independence is hampered.

When a man is under stress, he says, "If I was an individual, I would have dealt with this single-handedly. I have to keep listening to others because I have to support my four, five children." Likewise, when a woman undergoes difficulty because of her husband or due to some other reason she says, "If I were single, I would desert the place. Or I will at least drown in a lake or river. I will not spend half a minute tolerating this menace. But how can I leave these babies, these children?" So, their children and babies ruin their liberty and independence.

People of the world sell their freedom and become slaves for the sake of livelihood. Under these circumstances, how can freedom exist if people are burdened with the responsibility of protecting their children? In today's world pregnancy and delivering children has become an obstacle to the independence of men and women. Pregnancy is especially a cruel enemy to the independence of women. Because women lack wealth, income and a profession, they have to expect the support of others to raise their children. So we say that women should certainly stop having babies.

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Pregnancy is the root cause for women contracting diseases, developing signs of premature aging, having reduced lifespan and their lives cruelly cut short. Pregnancy is the obstacle that prevents women from creating the female categories of brahmacharini and sankarachari like the categories that exist for men (such as brahmachari, sanyasi, sankaracharya, tambiran and pandara sannidhi) and consequently women are unable to capture such elite places where they can live with freedom, own several crores and be worshipped by several men and women.

Therefore, we say that women must stop having children in order to be free, independent and attain emancipation. Despite the vast difference of opinion between others and ourselves, we feel that we share the same opinion on the necessity of birth control. This gives us pleasure.

But recently we were highly disappointed when the Health Minister on behalf of the Government opposed the birth control campaign while addressing the Legislative Assembly and moreover, Dr. Muthulakshmi Ammal who is the women's representative supported him.

Definitely, if the Government was under a compulsion to bring up and educate all the children born in this country till they become legal majors, the Health Minister wouldn't have opposed birth control on the Government's behalf. Instead, if somebody is going to have a child, somebody is going to lose self-respect, somebody is going to be brought up as a slave and the population is going to multiply, how will the Government come forward to oppose it? It is a regrettable incident that the Health Minister, and Muthulakshmi Ammal (who has acquired a doctor's degree in spite of being a woman),

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are not aware that birth control is of foremost importance for real hygiene. The public should not heed the Government's adverse stand. It is highly essential for each and every person to pay attention to this issue and do the necessary thing by themselves.

It is our opinion that the campaign for birth control is more important than the campaign against liquor and the campaign against communicable diseases.

Therefore, an institution for birth control has to be established in our country. Through that institution, not only should pamphlets, magazines and books be published, but rare books in English and other languages related to birth control should be translated into Tamil and published. Moreover, propaganda should be done through drama, cinema, etc. on the benefits and independence for our nation and for women arising out of birth control. We request at least a few members of the public to volunteer themselves at this juncture.

(*Kudiarasu*, 06-04-1930)

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10. "Masculinity" Must Be Destroyed for Women's Liberation

Everybody knows that the number of associations and activities in the name of women's liberation across the world keeps increasing day by day. Men pretend to be highly concerned and make a great deal of pretence. In our opinion, any liberation movement created by men cannot give real liberation to women. We think that not only do the current movements for women's liberation being run by men not yield any benefit, but they also continue to strengthen the restrictions that enable the enslavement of women.

This is like the situation where Brahmins, and foreigners who consider only Brahmins to be the representatives of this country, appear to work for the liberation of the Dravidian

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people; as a consequence of which the enslavement of the Dravidian people, and the restrictions ensuring that they never attain liberation, get strengthened day by day. And, this is like the situation where the Brahmins and the puranic Aryans donned the garb of reform and equality to infiltrate the reform movement; consequently social atrocities and hierarchies became established and reinforced by law and religion.

Likewise, not only does women's slavery grow because men toil for women's liberation, but the restrictions ensuring that women never attain liberation also become stronger. Men's pretence of respecting women and working for their liberation is nothing but a conspiracy to cheat women.

Will rats be liberated by the efforts of cats? Will goats and cocks be liberated by of foxes? Will the wealth of Indians increase because of the British? Will the non-Brahmins attain equality by the efforts of the Brahmins? If one thinks over these questions, one can realize the truth.

Even if liberation is somehow attained in these above cases, one can firmly believe that women will never attain liberation because of men.

Women shouldn't forget the fact that the word 'masculinity' is itself internationally used in a manner demeaning to women. Women should remember that as long as 'masculinity' exists in the world, 'femininity' wouldn't be respected. As long as 'masculinity' exists in the world, the enslavement of women will keep increasing. Unless women destroy the concept of 'masculinity', it is certain that they will not attain liberation. Women have been made into slaves because of 'masculinity'. All over the world, the words freedom and bravery have been made the property of 'masculinity'.

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Men have come to a conclusion that only masculinity possesses those qualities.

Moreover, women should realize that they have never been given deliverance or freedom in any aspect in Hinduism.

With regard to women, not only does the Hindu religion say that God created women as prostitutes by birth itself, but also that they should never be given independence consequently; therefore, it says that women should be under the control of their father in childhood and under the control of their children in their old age. The sastras and puranas of Hinduism say that Arundhati and Draupadi proved their divinity by their statement, "Women can be chaste only if there are no men, no hidden locations and no darkness." There are many such evidences in the religious texts. Their scheme is nothing but to make women the slaves of men.

If women and men look at it from a neutral perspective they will understand that women were made slaves because of men; all men consider 'masculinity' and the enslavement of women to have been created by God, and the enslavement of women has gained strength because even women hold this true on the basis of tradition. If the birth-based hierarchy among the people should be destroyed, it is essential to burn the Hindu religious doctrines that teach it. Likewise, if women have to attain true liberation, it is essential to destroy the concept of godliness that is responsible for the god-created 'masculinity' and 'femininity.'

Presently, women remain to be greater barriers to women's liberation than men. This is because even now women fail to think that they are capable of having complete freedom like men. They think that their physical

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characteristics are an indication that God has made them as the slaves of men. That is, every woman thinks that "men may live without women, but women cannot live without men." If we look at the cause for such reasoning, it is because they are unable to prove to themselves that they can live without men since they have the trouble of child bearing. And because men don't have the trouble of child bearing, they feel that men can live without women.

Moreover, since they depend on others due to the burden of child bearing, it is possible for male domination to be formed there. So, for the true liberation of women, the problem of child bearing should be totally destroyed. Unless that problem is destroyed, women cannot attain true liberation even if they are going to keep husbands on a payroll. Since no one has said this before, the public will consider this statement to be a great foolishness. Still, except through this path, that is, the path of liberating women from the trouble of bearing children, masculinity cannot be destroyed in any other way. Moreover, it is indisputable that women will not attain liberation through other means. A few people may say that it is against nature. While plants and animals live according to nature, only human beings lead a life against nature that is mostly artificial. So, nothing would be lost by behaving unnaturally even in this aspect for the sake of the ensuing benefits.

Apart from this, a few people would come forth and talk about justice and fairness. They would say that if women stop bearing children, "the world will not develop; the human race will not reproduce itself." What difficulty would fall upon women if the world doesn't increase? What danger could befall women if the human race doesn't multiply? We don't

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understand what difficulty would arise (because of the human race not reproducing) for those who talk about such kind of justice? We don't know of any benefit that has come out of the human race that has multiplied for so long.

The slavishness of women doesn't affect women alone; in another manner, it also affects men. Ordinary men don't realize this. But, we are least bothered about it at this juncture. We are only concerned about women.

In the present situation, if women undertake other steps for their liberation, it might present a little difficulty to men. But, if women are not going to have children, men will not have any hardship or loss. Moreover, they will also prefer it. Because, to a great level, a man is unable to be honest and independent only because he has children. Moreover, his unnecessary worries and responsibilities increase.

We will detail the other issues arising out of this on another occasion.

(*Kudiarasu*, 12-08-1928)

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Appendix I

Biographical Sketch of Periyar

1879 Sep 17
E.V. Ramasamy was born in Erode as the second son of Chinna Thaayammal and Venkata Naicker, a rich merchant. They were orthodox Vaishnavaites.

1885 [Age - 06]
He was sent to a small primary school.

1889 [Age - 10]
His schooling came to an end.

1891 [Age - 12]
He entered his father's trade.

1895
He grew up hearing to the discourses on mythology delivered

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by Vaishnavaite gurus who enjoyed his parents' hospitality. Even at that young age, he questioned the contradictions and absurdities in the Hindu myths [that were fabricated by the Aryans to subjugate the Dravidians]. Rationalism and atheism blossomed in his mind.

1898

He married Nagammal. He reformed his wife and sowed rationalist views in her mind.

1900

He became the father of a female child who died when she was five-months-old. Thereafter, he had no children.

1904

He renounced family life because of his father's harsh reprimand. He first went to Vijayawada and then proceeded to Hyderabad and Kolkata.

He reached the pilgrimage town of Varanasi on the banks of the River Ganges. There he couldn't get free meals at choultries that exclusively fed Brahmins. Having starved for days together, the young and handsome Ramasamy came up with the plan of entering a choultry in the guise of a Brahmin by wearing a sacred thread on his bare chest. But his moustache betrayed him. So the gatekeeper not only prevented his entry but also pushed him to the street. At that moment, since the feast was over the leftover food (served on plantain leaves) was thrown out on the street. Ramasamy, who had not eaten for the past few days, ate with street-dogs to satisfy his unbearable hunger. As he ate, he chanced to

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look at the carving on the building's entrance. It revealed that only a wealthy Dravidian merchant from Tamil Nadu had built that choultry which was exclusively occupied by the Brahmins.

He was struck with questions to which he had no apparent answers: Why did the Brahmins prevent Dravidians from taking meals in a choultry that had been built with money from a Dravidian philanthropist? Why did Brahmins behave so mercilessly? Why were they fanatic enough to push the Dravidians to death by starvation through the adamant enforcement of the caste system?

This disgrace inflicted a deep wound in his heart and inflamed intense hatred towards the Brahmins. Though Brahmins had acclaimed Varanasi as the most sacred place, he began to abhor it because he witnessed immoral activities like prostitution, cheating, looting and crowds begging for alms. The sight of dead bodies floating down the river Ganges nauseated him.

Consequently, a rethink on his renunciation made him return to family life. Upon his return to Erode, his father delegated all his trade rights to Ramasamy and renamed his major commercial concern as "E.V. Ramasamy Naicker Mandi."

1905 onwards

He gradually became a well-known, wealthy businessman in Erode and he entered public life by selflessly rendering social services.

A noteworthy instance: Erode was besieged by plague and hundreds of people died. Thousands fled in order to save their

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lives. But this noble man didn't desert his native town like other rich merchants. He carried dead bodies to the cremation ground himself while the deceased person's relatives themselves did not touch them due to fear of contagion.

He commanded enormous influence over other traders in Erode. He mediated impartially to solve many disputes among the businessmen. In his youth, he was attracted by the Tamil scholar Iyothee Thassa Pandithar who vehemently condemned the caste system and Brahmanical Hindu religion through rationalism and Buddhism.

Despite his intense hatred towards the Hindu religion and its caste system (especially 'untouchability'), his executive efficiency and honesty fetched him several positions in various public institutions. The British Government made him an Honorary Magistrate. He held 29 honorary positions (such as President, Secretary, Vice-President) in various public institutions like the District Board, Taluk Board, Urban Bank, Devasthanam (Religious Trust), Public Library, War Recruitment Committee, Agriculturists' Association, Merchants' Association, Mahajana School Committee etc.

The Tamil scholar Pulavar Marudhaiya Pillai of Karur was admired even by the ordinary rural people for his logical arguments and daring condemnation of the Hindu religion, caste system, deceptive myths in the epics and Vedic sastras. Friendship with him played a major role in firmly inculcating atheism in Periyar's mind. Intimacy with another Tamil scholar Sage Kaivalyam also enriched Periyar's rationalism. He was soon befriended by many higher officials and learned persons like Engineer P.V. Manicka Naicker because of his progressive views.

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1909

Unyielding to stiff protests from orthodox family members, Periyar arranged the remarriage of his sister's daughter who was widowed when she was nine years old.

1918 Sacrifices for the freedom movement

He became the Chairman of the Erode municipality and effectively implemented many welfare schemes, particularly the drinking water scheme. In this period, friendship blossomed between him and C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji).

1919

P. Varadharajulu Naidu and Rajaji persuaded Periyar to join the Indian National Congress led by Gandhi.

Periyar enrolled himself as member of the Congress after resigning from the Chairmanship of the Erode municipality.

1920

He actively participated in the Non-Co-operation Movement launched against the British rule by Mahatma Gandhi. Responding to Gandhi's clarion call, Periyar resigned all the 29 public positions he occupied. He gave up the family trade and closed his business concern that had provided him with an annual income of Rs. 20,000. He defied prohibitory orders under section 144 that were promulgated in Erode for the first time and courted arrest by picketing toddy shops.

Periyar accepted Mahatma Gandhi as his leader. He was a true disciple who transformed Gandhi's words into deeds. For instance, when Gandhi advocated handspun cloth (khadi), Periyar discarded all his costly foreign clothes and began

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wearing khadi. He forced all his family members, including his 80-year-old mother to wear only khadi. He enforced simplicity into his hitherto pompous lifestyle.

1920

The idea of prohibition of liquor was first conceived only at Periyar's residence. When Gandhi came to Erode and stayed at Periyar's home, his wife Nagammal and sister Kannammal explained the agony faced by women married to drunkards and strongly stressed the need to draw a policy to prohibit liquor. They also pleaded that an agitation must be launched in this regard. Gandhi took up their worthy suggestion at once. He announced that the Congressmen should picket in front of toddy shops throughout the country urging the British Government to implement the policy of liquor-prohibition. To accomplish Gandhi's command, Periyar uprooted more than 500 coconut trees in his vast grove because they had been used for toddy tapping. Such was his commitment to prohibition.

1921

At Erode, Periyar led the agitators to picket in front of liquor-shops.

He was arrested and sentenced to undergo imprisonment for one month.

1922

His wife Nagammal and sister Kannammal also bravely jumped into the agitation and they led women volunteers to picket in front of liquor-shops.

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When some Congress frontline leaders requested Gandhi to stop the agitation, he earnestly replied that such a decision to stop the agitation was not in his hands but with two women of Erode (he implied Periyar's wife and his sister).

Then, Periyar became the President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee.

At the provincial conference the Congress held at Tirupur, he moved a resolution urging the right for temple-entry to be given to 'Untouchables'. But the Brahmins of the Congress Committee prevented the resolution from being passed. Provoked by their casteist frenzy, Periyar declared that he would burn the Manusmrithi and Ramayana because these texts had been utilised by the wily Brahmins as religious weapons to suppress the Dravidian race through the evil of caste and superstition.

1923

The Justice Party Government under the Raja of Panagal passed a Bill in the Madras State Legislative Council to create the Hindu Religious Endowment Board to end the exploitation by the Brahmins in Hindu temples. Though he was a Congress leader, Periyar supported this legislation brought by the Justice Party Government, because of his sincere concern for social justice.

1924

Periyar appreciated the measures of the Justice Party Government towards implementing the policy of Communal Reservation in education and employment through Government Orders.

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To abolish the cruel system of Untouchability sternly observed by the Brahmins, Periyar daringly led the agitation at Vaikom in Kerala defying prohibitory orders. In the temple town of Vaikom, the people belonging to the low castes including Ezhavas were not allowed to walk the streets around the temple. So the local Congress party people started an agitation (satyagraha: passive resistance).

They requested Periyar to come from Tamil Nadu to take up the leadership of the satyagraha. He led the agitation; therefore, he was arrested and sent to jail. Twice, he was sentenced to imprisonment. On the second occasion he was awarded rigorous imprisonment for six months. The satyagraha went on for a year. Consequently, the temple streets were thrown open to the low castes and Untouchables. Courageous sacrifice and the fight for human rights secured victory. Periyar was hailed as the "Hero of Vaikom."

1924 Sep 11

The British Government sent him to jail for his propagation for Khadi and boycott of foreign goods.

Caste discrimination was practiced by V.V.S. Iyer, a Brahmin in charge of Gurukulam, the hostel of the National Training School at Cheranmaadhevi near Thirunelveli. This institution was actually funded by Tamil Nadu Congress Committee and some Dravidian philanthropists.

Iyer's casteist approach that favoured Brahmin students and segregated the Dravidian students infuriated Periyar. Hence he resigned the post of Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. However, Periyar was then elected as the President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee.

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He presided over the provincial conference of the Congress held at Tiruvannamalai in November 1924.

Since 1920, he had taken efforts to move a resolution in Congress conferences demanding communal reservation in education and Government jobs for the Non-Brahmins so that their degradation would be removed and they could attain high positions in all spheres of life on par with the Brahmins. He proposed the same resolution at the Tiruvannamalai Congress Conference also. But the Brahmins defeated it as they had done in earlier conferences-- Tirunelveli (1920), Thanjavur (1921), Tiruppur (1922) and Salem (1923).

Speaking at a public meeting in Salem, Periyar cautioned that unless the right of communal representation for Non-Brahmins was attained during the British Rule itself, Brahmin supremacy would never be brought to an end.

He said that otherwise the Dravidian race would continue to suffer under the tyranny of "Brahminocracy" (The "Hindu" Centenary Special Number: page 337). Thus he even coined a new word.

1925 May 2

Periyar edited and published a Tamil weekly **Kudi Arasu** to spread the principles of **Self-Respect.**

Through this newspaper he aimed to awaken the Dravidians and make them aware of the oppression they suffered under the Brahmins because of the caste system and superstitions in the Hindu religion.

The first issue of Kudi Arasu was released by the reputed Tamil religious scholar and eloquent orator Thiruppathiripuliyur Gnaniyar Swamigal.

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1925 Nov

At the provincial Congress conference held at Kancheepuram, which was presided over by the great Tamil author, editor, orator and labour leader Thiru. Vi. Kalyana Sundaranar, (Thiru. Vi. Ka.), Periyar moved the resolution demanding Communal representation for the Non-Brahmins.

As usual, the cunning Brahmins stalled its passage. Periyar was enraged at his defeat, so he quit the Brahmin dominated Congress Party.

While bidding farewell to the Congress, Periyar thunderously vowed that his only task in future was to destroy Brahmin Raj by all means. On his leaving the conference, a large group of frontline leaders and volunteers also followed him.

At the same town Kancheepuram, Periyar organised a parallel conference of the Non-Brahmins. In his address, Periyar declared that the racial difference between Dravidians and Aryans (Brahmins) existed from ancient times and added that its prevalence in the Congress could not be denied. Therefore, he stressed the compelling need for the Dravidians to preserve the Self-respect of their race, language, and culture that had been degraded by the Brahmins.

Thus, Periyar founded the Self-respect movement in 1925 after his exit from the Congress.

1926

He participated in many Non-Brahmin Conferences held at various places in Tamil Nadu and propagated the principles of his Self-respect movement to awaken the Dravidian race to free itself from slavery under the Brahmins.

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1927

Periyar met Gandhi at Bangalore and argued that unless the poisonous caste-system called Varnashrama Dharma was uprooted, untouchability could not be eradicated.

He also emphatically told Gandhi that before fighting for Indian independence, three evils (1) The Congress Party (captured by Brahmin office-bearers), (2) Hindu religion with its caste-system and (3) the Brahmin domination in society should be put to an end.

When the workers at Railway workshop in Nagappattinam struck work, Periyar who supported the labourers was arrested and sent to jail.

With active support from Periyar, S. Muthaiah (Mudaliar), a Minister in Dr. P. Subbarayan's 'Independent' ministry, implemented the Communal Reservation scheme of the Justice Party.

1928 Nov 7

Periyar published an English magazine *Revolt*.

1929 Feb

The first provincial conference of the Self-Respect Movement was organised by Periyar at Chengalpattu. It was presided over by W.P.A. Soundara Pandian.

Periyar introduced a new rationalist marriage system: Self-Respect Marriage. In a Self-Respect marriage, all religious rituals, including the chanting of Sanskrit mantras by Brahmins, were forbidden. It was enough for the couple to garland each other and declare the wedding affirmation in their mother tongue. The marriage was to be a simple affair

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and not a pompous, wasteful event. These were the conditions laid down by Periyar for his reformatory wedlock system. By this new matrimonial arrangement, he secularized marriage. Any person, irrespective of religion, could conduct the marriage by asking the bride and the bridegroom to exchange garlands and make the declaration to be life-partners.

Besides this, Periyar also encouraged inter-caste marriages and widow marriages.

1929 Dec 15

Accepting the invitation from Tamils in Malaysia, Periyar started his voyage from Nagapattinam. His wife Nagammai and some followers accompanied him.

1929 Dec 20

A rousing reception was accorded to Periyar and his companions by more than 50,000 Malay Tamils at the Penang harbour.

1929 Dec 23

Periyar inaugurated the Tamil Conference convened by the Tamils Reformatory Sangam at Ipoh in Malaysia.

1929 Dec 26

A warm welcome was given to Periyar at Singapore. He addressed the conference organised by the Malaya Indian Congress.

He addressed many meetings at various places like Kuala Lumpur, Malacca, Sungeipattani etc., propagating the principles of the Self-Respect Movement.

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1930 Jan 16

Periyar and others returned from Malaysia.

He published his book on Family Planning (Birth Control). He was the first Indian leader who authored a book to stress the prime need of Family Planning.

1930 May 10, 11

The second provincial conference of the Self-respect Movement was convened by Periyar at Erode. It was presided over by M.R. Jayakar a rationalist leader from Pune.

Simultaneously a youth conference, a women's conference, a liquor-prohibition conference, Tamil music patronage conference were also conducted by him at the same venue.

He actively supported the Bill for the abolition of the devadasi system. Dr. Muthulakshmi (Reddy), a woman reformer proposed that Bill which was passed in the Madras Legislative Council despite strong opposition from the caste-fanatic Brahmin leaders.

1931

The third provincial Self-respect conference was held at Virudhunagar. R.K.Shanmugam presided over it.

1931 Dec 13

Periyar travelled by sea to Europe from Chennai. S. Ramanathan and Ramu of Erode accompanied him.

1932

He visited many European countries including Greece,

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Turkey, [the former] Soviet Union, Germany, England, Italy, Spain, France, Portugal and so on.

His stay in the Soviet Union was extended by a three-month period because he was invited to address several workers' meetings.

Periyar was attracted by Soviet Union, the first nation established on the principle of Karl Marx's Communism, by the great leader Lenin.

In Berlin, Periyar visited several Socialist associations and the offices of Socialist magazines.

1932 June 20

In England, Periyar addressed a massive public meeting attended by more than fifty thousand people. He explained his principles on Rationalism and Socialism.

1932 Nov 11

He returned to Erode after completing his European tour.

1932 Dec 28, 29

At Periyar's residence, Self-Respecters discussed a Socialist Programme drafted by Comrade Singaravelu, the first South-Indian Communist.

1932

Periyar advocated the 'Erode Plan of Socialism' in several meetings that he addressed throughout Tamil Nadu.

1933 May 11

Periyar's wife Mrs. E.V.R. Nagammai passed away.

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1933 May 12

Periyar immediately left for Tiruchi where he conducted an inter-religious (Christian) Self-Respect Marriage defying Section 144 promulgated in this connection and courted arrested.

1933 Nov 26

Periyar convened a conference on Self-Respect and Socialism at Erode.

1933

The repressive British Government banned the Tamil weekly *Kudiarasu*. Periyar commenced publication of another magazine *Puratchi* (Revolution).

1933 Dec 30

Periyar and his sister Kannammal were arrested and sent to prison for an editorial in Kudiarasu.

1934

Socialist leader 'Lok Nayak' Jaya Prakash Narayan met Periyar at his residence and requested him to join the Socialist Party that he had founded.

1934 Jan 12

Periyar brought out the Tamil weekly *Pagutharivu* (Rationalism).

1935

Periyar extended his support to the Justice Party.

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1935 Jan 13
Periyar's script reform was adopted in all Tamil newspapers and books published by him.

1935 June 1
The Justice Party started the Tamil weekly *Viduthalai.*

1936
At the Kanchipuram conference, he arranged for a resolution to be passed against the imposition of Hindi.

1937
Having become the Premier of the Madras Presidency, C.Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) announced that Hindi would be made a compulsory subject in the school curriculum.

1937 Jan 1
Periyar was entrusted with the responsibility of publishing Viduthalai as a daily.

1937 Dec 26
The 'Tamils Conference' was convened at Thiruchirappalli. Periyar declared that the only way to defeat the dominance of Hindi over Tamil and Dravidian race was to have a 'a separate sovereign state' based on the principle that "Tamil Nadu is for the Tamils."

1938
In his book , "The world to come" he visualized many scientific inventions including the possibility of "Test-tube baby."

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Periyar opposed the imposition of Hindi in schools. Rajaji had announced 25 February 1938 to be the date of introduction of Hindi but it was actually introduced on 23 April 1938.

1938 June 4

Periyar picketed in front of the Hindu Theological School, Chennai where Hindi was introduced. He courted arrest.

1938 Nov 13

The Progressive Women's Association of Tamil Nadu conferred on him the title of 'Periyar' (a great or noble person) in its Chennai conference. The Conference was presided over by Neelambigai Ammaiyar, the daughter of renowned Tamil scholar Maraimalai Adigal.

1938 Dec 6

He was sentenced to undergo imprisonment for 2 years. He was lodged in the Chennai Central Prison and then transferred to the Bellary Jail.

1938 Dec 29

He was elected President of the Justice Party even when he was in the Bellary Jail.

1940

He met Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mohammed Ali Jinnah in Bombay. C.N. Annadurai (popularly, Anna) accompanied him.

When Rajaji's Ministry resigned, Periyar was invited to form the alternative ministry since he was the elected leader of the Justice Party. Periyar did not oblige.

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At the Thiruvarur Conference, he put forward the demand for a separate Dravida Nadu to save the Dravidian race and the Tamil language from the domination of Hindi and north-Indian Hindu capitalists.

1944 Aug 27

The Justice Party was renamed 'Dravidar Kazhagam' to signify that it was entirely a social revolutionary movement for the emancipation of Dravidian race oppressed by Brahmins at the provincial (special) Justice Party conference held at Salem and it was also decided not to contest elections and accept the titles given by British Govt.

1946 May 11

The famous "Black-shirts Conference" was held on the banks of the River Vaigai in Madurai. Hooligans, who were acting under instructions from Brahmins, set fire to the Conference pandal. Periyar and his followers were stranded for the whole day.

1947 Aug 15

While the whole world rejoiced the attainment of Indian independence, Periyar had the foresight to call it a day of mourning for the Tamils. He said 'Indian Independence' was nothing but a transfer of the power of rule of the nation from the British to the Brahmins and Baniyas.

1947 Sep 14

The Dravida Nadu Separation Conference was held at Cuddalore.

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1948

The Black-shirt Volunteer Corps was banned.

1948 Jan 30

In New Delhi, Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated on his way to a prayer meeting by Godse, a Marathi Brahmin. Periyar condemned the assassination and suggested that India should be renamed Gandhi Nadu (Gandhi Nation).

1948 May 8, 9

Dravidar Kazhagam's 18th State Conference was held at Tuticorin and was presided over by Periyar.

He and Anna participated in the Anti-Hindi Volunteers Conference held under the leadership of Maraimalai Adigal in Chennai.

1948 Aug 10

The second anti-Hindi agitation started at Kumbakonam on the directives of Periyar.

1948 Aug 22

It was decided to organize a black flag demonstration against Rajaji when he visited Madras as Governor General of India. Periyar and his followers were arrested and kept in the Chennai Central Prison and he was released on 27 August 1948.

1949

Periyar married Maniammai. The marriage was performed with the main intention of safeguarding the movement's properties since Periyar had no legal heir.

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1950 Jan 22
He was sentenced to imprisonment for the publication of his book Ponmozhigal (Golden sayings).

1950 Jan 26
He declared Republic Day as a Mourning Day for Tamils.

1951
Sensing the formidable opposition engineered by Periyar, the Central Government amended the Constitution of India for the first time. Ultimately, sub-clause (4) was added to Article 15 to preserve the right to equal opportunity for the backward classes.

1952
Periyar opposed the Kula-kalvi Thittam (caste-based education policy) introduced by the then Chief-Minister Rajaji. According to this scheme, students would be given vocational education based on their parents' hereditary occupation. Periyar viewed this as a cunning attempt to perpetuate the caste system.

Periyar and his followers blackened name-boards in Hindi in railway stations all over Tamil Nadu.

1953
He launched a campaign to condemn idol worship and to show to the world that there was no divine power in idols. He and his followers publicly broke the idol of Pillaiyar (Vinayaga).

1954
Periyar's opposition to Rajaji's proposed educational reform was so formidable that Rajaji had to quit the post of

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Chief Minister. Consequently K. Kamaraj became the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in April 1954 and he dropped the casteist, controversial and anti-people educational reform.

1954 Dec

Periyar convened the Buddhism Conference at Erode. Periyar visited Myanmar and Malaysia with his wife and friends. At Mandalay, he attended the World Buddhist Conference where he met Mallala Sekara, a Buddhist Scholar and Dr.B.R.Ambedkar.

He conversed with Dr. Ambedkar for a long time. They also discussed about conversion to Buddhism. Periyar strongly advised him to convert to Buddhism with a large number of people.

1954 Dec

Periyar toured Malaysia for the second time and propagated his rationalist principles.

1955

Periyar fixed a date to set fire to the Indian national flag to protest the forceful imposition of Hindi against the wishes of the Tamils.

Periyar was arrested for publicly burning the pictures of Rama, as a symbolic protest against Aryan domination and the degradation of the Dravidian kings in the Ramayana.

R. S. Malayappan, the Tiruchi District Collector was wantonly penalized by two Brahmin judges of the Madras High Court in one of their judgments. Malayappan belonged a backward caste and was a sympathizer of the Depressed

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Classes. In a public meeting held at the Tiruchi Town Hall, Periyar exposed this prejudiced casteist judgment and criticized the High Court judges for their hatred against officers belonging to the lower castes.

1957 Jan 18

Vinoba Bhave, founder-leader of the land donation movement met Periyar in Tiruchi.

1957 April 23

Periyar was charged with contempt of court for his criticism of the judgment of two Brahmin judges in the Malayappan case. When this case came up for final hearing before Justice P.V. Rajamannar and Justice A.S. Panchapakesa Iyer, Periyar made a statement in the High Court, explaining how Brahmins conducted themselves with communal motive and opined that it was their inborn natural 'dharma' to annihilate developing Shudras and Panchamas.

1957 Nov 3

To celebrate Periyar's birthday, he was gifted silver coins equivalent to his weight at a large conference in Thanjavur.

A resolution was passed calling upon the Tamils to come forward to burn copies of the excerpts of the Constitution of India, supportive of the caste system. About 10,000 people burnt the excerpts of the Constitution of India on 26th November, but only 3000 of them were arrested. They were awarded rigorous imprisonment for periods ranging from six months to three years. A special act was framed to punish them. This agitation rocked Tamil Nadu because this was the

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first major agitation against caste. More than 15 persons died (either in custody, or just out of jail) because of the rigours of incarceration.

1958

In Brahmin-run hotels, the name-boards used to carry the words 'Brahmin Hotel' to create the impression that Brahmins were a superior caste. Periyar requested his followers to erase the word 'Brahmin' from hotel name-boards. Accordingly, a campaign to erase the word 'Brahmin' from all Brahmin hotels in Tamil Nadu was launched. As a result, the word 'Brahmin' disappeared from hotel name-boards.

Periyar was arrested in connection with a case foisted on him by the Tamil Nadu Government. It was alleged that he had exhorted his followers to attack Brahmins in his speeches delivered at Pasupathipalayam (Karur), Kulitalai and Tiruchi. The District Sessions Court at Tiruchi sentenced him to six months imprisonment.

Periyar and Ram Manohar Lohia, the north Indian Socialist leader met at Chennai and discussed their social and political service.

1959

He toured North India addressing meetings at Kanpur, Lucknow, New Delhi and other places.

1960

He burnt the map of the rest of India (excluding Tamil Nadu) to point out that the Central Government rule was a Brahmin rule.

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Periyar ordered the observation of a protest day all over Tamil Nadu against the Supreme Court judgement that crippled the operation of the Tamil Nadu Land Ceiling Act. It was later ratified by an amendment to the Constitution of India.

1967

C.N. Annadurai (Anna) became the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, since the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) secured majority of seats in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. He went to Tiruchi and sought Periyar's greetings, goodwill and advice.

Periyar decided to extend his support to the DMK ministry. Anna declared in the State Assembly that he dedicated his 'Ministry' to Periyar. He also enacted the Self-Respect Marriage Act that legalised all the ritual-less Self-Respect marriages that had been conducted so far. Anna, a lieutenant of Periyar, brought about a legislation renaming Madras State as Tamil Nadu and also introduced the two-language formula (Tamil and English) for Tamil Nadu, instead of the three-language formula prescribed by the Central Government. These three achievements were the milestones of his ministry.

1968

As a true rationalist disciple of Periyar, Anna issued a circular directing the removal of pictures of daities and religious symbols from government offices as a secular measure.

Periyar observed a day to condemn the exploitation by north-Indian business magnates.

Periyar was invited to address the Minorities Conference at Lucknow.

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The Aryan epic Ramayana was burnt all over Tamil Nadu to symbolically mark the distrust against Aryans and towards protest the demeaning portrayal and treatment of Dravidians in that epic.

1969 Feb 3

Chief Minister Anna expired. Periyar plunged into profound grief. He said that the future of Tamil Nadu was bleak because of Anna's demise.

1969

Periyar announced a programme of agitation to secure the right to enter the sanctum sanctorum of temples for people of all castes. The programme aimed to eradicate caste discrimination practised within religion, since only Brahmins could become archakas (priests) and they performed ritual chanting only in Sanskrit and never in Tamil.

1970

The Tamil Bimonthly, *Unmai* (Truth) was launched at Tiruchi by Periyar. Dr. K. Veeramani, General Secretary (currently, President) of the Dravidar Kazhagam released the first issue.

1970 June 27

UNESCO, a sister organisation of the United Nations, conferred the following citation on Periyar: "Periyar, the prophet of New Age, Socrates of South East Asia, Father of the Social Reform Movement, and Arch-enemy of ignorance, superstitions, meaningless customs and base manners." The award was presented by the Union Minister for Education,

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Dr. Triguna Sen and the event was presided over by Chief Minister Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi. Periyar inaugurated the 'Rationalist Forum,' a non-political social organisation, consisting of Government and private employees and others who were rationalists.

A legislation enabling people of all castes to become archakas (priests) in temples was passed in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. Periyar had demanded such a legislation to abolish the caste system and to establish equality of people irrespective of caste.

Periyar launched the English monthly, *'Modern Rationalist'*.

1970 Nov 1

The Mumbai branch of the Dravidar Kazhagam arranged birthday celebrations of Periyar (September 17) and Anna (September 15). Periyar attended these functions and few other meetings in Mumbai for three days from November 1, 1970. He was accompanied by EVR Maniammai and Dr. K. Veeramani, General Secretary of the Dravidar Kazhagam.

1971 Mar 3

Following the 1971 Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, the new DMK ministry was sworn in. Kalaignar Karunanidhi became the Chief Minister. Periyar attended the swearing-in ceremony.

1971 Sep 17

Periyar's statue was unveiled in his hometown Erode by Kalaignar Karunanidhi, the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Kundrakudi Adigalar presided over the function.

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1972 Aug13

At Cuddalore, Periyar's statue was unveiled by Kalaignar Karunanidhi. . C.P. Chitrarasu, Chairman of the Legislative Council presided over the function.

1973 Sep 16, 17

Periyar participated in his 95th birthday celebrations. The Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (ADMK) General Secretary M.G. Ramachandran offered laurels and a purse to Periyar.

1973 Sep 30

A 'Conference of Black-shirts' was organized in Madurai. Periyar's statue was unveiled by state Minister Dr. V.R. Nedunchezhian, the event was chaired by another minister Panruti S. Ramachandran.

1973 Dec 8, 9

Periyar convened a social conference to eradicate the social degradation and caste system imposed by the Brahmins. This conference was held at the Periyar Thidal, Chennai and was attended by a large number of people.

In his eloquent speech, Periyar exhorted all Dravidians to come forward and work for the eradication of caste and social degradation. Many historic resolutions were then passed in this conference.

1973 Dec 19

At Thiyagaraya Nagar in Chennai Periyar delivered his last speech. His swansong was a memorable dying declaration.

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1973 Dec 20

Periyar was admitted to the Government General Hospital in Chennai because of ill health.

1973 Dec 21

Periyar was taken to the Christian Medical College Hospital, Vellore as per his wishes.

1973 Dec 24

Periyar, the greatest original humanist thinker and resolute rationalist of the world, breathed his last, putting billions of rationalists, Tamilians and admirers all over the globe into unbearable agony.

Chief Minister Kalaignar Karunanidhi declared official State mourning. The Government of Tamil Nadu declared December 24, 1973 as a Government holiday through a special Gazette notification.

1973 Dec 25

A state funeral with police honours was arranged in Chennai. His body was kept in the Rajaji Hall for the public to pay their last respects. Dignitaries, his followers, friends, and the public assembled in millions to pay homage. The funeral procession started in the evening and reached the Periyar Thidal where his body was laid to rest. Leaders like K. Kamaraj and Kalaignar Karunanidhi participated in the procession.

1974 Jan 6

After Periyar's death, his wife EVR Maniammai became the President of the Dravidar Kazhagam.

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1978 March 16

EVR Maniammai passed away.

1978 March- 17

Mr. K. Veeramani, who was nominated as General Secretary by Periyar in 1960, continued as the Secretary General of the movement. He is currently the President of the Dravidar Kazhagam and carries on Periyar's torch of liberation. He has established numerous institutions as permanent memorials to the greatest universal rationalist thinker, Periyar E.V. Ramasamy. He has been responsible for publishing Periyar's collected works in 26 volumes and Periyar's biography, covering the period subsequent to 1940. The life-history of his first 60 years had been written in 1940 itself.

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Glossary

Arundhati	Wife of sage Vasistha; mythology identifies her with the morning star. She is invoked during Hindu marriage ceremonies and is representative of an ideal steadfast wife.
Avvai	Name of more than one poet who was active during different periods of Tamil literature. One Avvai lived during the Sangam Age (first and second century C.E.). Another Avvai lived during the reign of the Cholas (13th century C.E.)—Periyar refers to her because she is the poet who is popular for her didactic works.
Brahmacharini	Female equivalent of Brahmachari.
Brahmachari	One who has taken *Brahmacharya,* the vow of celibacy.
Brahmin	The Hindu priestly class, placed on top of the caste hierarchy.
Devadasi	Literally means "Servant of God." In this practice, girls were 'married' to a deity and forced into ritual prostitution. Despite its religious cover, it was a system of commercial sexual exploitation.

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Draupadi	Most complex and controversial female character in the ancient Indian epic Mahabharatha. Daughter of King Draupada and wife of the five Pandava brothers.
Kambar	Eleventh century Tamil poet who authored *Ramavatharam* (Kamba Ramayanam) which was the Tamil re-telling of the Sanskrit epic Ramayana.
Manu Dharma	Refers to *Varnashrama Dharma*, or the caste system. Called Manu Dharma, after the Hindu law-giver Manu who codified the caste system in his *Manusmriti*.
Naidu	A landowning caste Hindu community.
Pandara Sannidhi	The head of a Saiva mutt who is the chief of the ascetics of his mutt and has authority to admit others to theascetic order.
Ramayana	Ancient Sanskrit epic attributed to the poet Valmiki and an important part of the Hindu canon. It tells the story of a prince, Rama of Ayodhya.
Sankaracharini	Female equivalent of Sankaracharya.
Sankaracharya	A commonly used title for heads of monasteries in the Advaita tradition. The title derives from Sankara of Kaladi in Kerala, a Hindu theologian who supposedly established four monasteries in four regions of India: Puri, Shringeri, Dwarka and Jotishimath.
Sanyasi	One who has taken *Sanyas*, the renounced order of life within Hinduism.

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Sati system	A Hindu funeral custom (now very rare and a serious criminal act) in which the dead man's widow would be forced to immolate herself on her husband's funeral pyre.
Stridhanam	Daughter's wedding settlement.
Swadeshi	Part of the Indian independence movement; economic strategy to remove British empire from power and improve economic conditions through principles of Swadeshi (Self-Sufficiency). It was described by Gandhi as the soul of *Swaraj*.
Swaraj	Self-Governance, or popularly, "Home Rule." Refers to Gandhi's concept for Indian independence from foreign domination.
Tambiran	Monk of a Saivaite (believer of Siva, one of the Gods of the Hindu Trinity) monastery who carries out administrative duties.
Thirukkural	One of the oldest and most revered works in the Tamil language. Authored by Thiruvalluvar.
Thiruvalluvar	The greatest and most-influential Tamil poet. He authored the timeless ethical work, Thirukkural. Scholars variously date him to have lived between 100 B.C. and 300 A.D.
Vaishnavaites	Believers of Vishnu, one of the Gods of the Hindu Trinity.
Valmiki	Legendary Hindu sage regarded as the author of the epic Ramayana.

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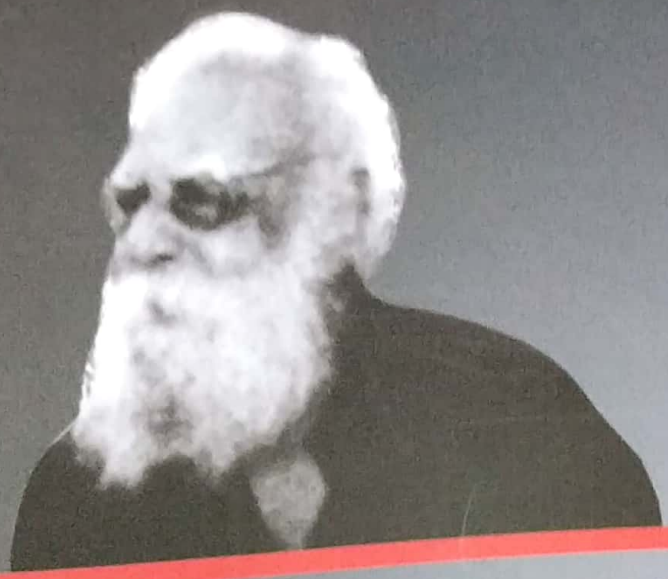

Will rats be liberated because of cats? Will goats and cocks be liberated because of foxes? Will the wealth of Indians increase because of the British? Will the non - Brahmins attain equality because of the Brahmins? If one thinks over these questions, one can realize the truth.

Even if liberation is somehow attained in these above cases, one firmly believe that women will never attain liberation because of men.

Women shouldn't forget the fact that the word 'masculinity' is itself internationally used in a manner demeaning to women. Women should remember that as long as 'masculinity' exists in the world, 'femininity' wouldn't be respected. As long as 'masculinity' exists in the world, the enslavement of women will keep increasing. Unless women destroy the concept of 'masculinity', it is certain that they will not attain liberation.

- Thanthai Periyar (Page 62)

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